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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
THE FARM SECURITY ADMINISTRATION
AND
THE BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS
COOPERATING

Disadvantaged Classes in American Agriculture

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AND E. L. KIRKPATRICK

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In order that administrators might be supplied with needed information concerning the problems and conditions with which its program is concerned, the Resettlement Administration (absorbed September 1, 1937, by the Farm Security Administration) with the cooperation of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics conducted a number of research investigations. This is one of a series of reports on these researches. Others will be made available to administrators of programs for the welfare of rural people as rapidly as they are completed. Reports to be issued, as planned at this time, include:

- I. An Analysis of Methods and Criteria Used in Selecting Families for Colonization Projects, by John B. Holt.
- II. Tenure of New Agricultural Holdings in Several European Countries, by Erich Kraemer.
- III. Living Conditions and Population Migration in Four Appalachian Counties, by L. S. Dodson.
- IV. Social Status and Farm Tenure - Attitudes and Social Conditions of Corn Belt and Cotton Belt Farmers, by E. A. Schuler.
- V. Family Selection on a Federal Reclamation Project - Tule Lake Division of the Klamath Irrigation Project, Oregon-California, by Marie Jasny.
- VI. A Basis for Social Planning in Coffee County, Alabama, by Karl Shafer.
- VII. Influence of Drought and Depression on a Rural Community - A Case Study in Haskell County, Kansas, by A. D. Edwards.
- VIII. Disadvantaged Classes in American Agriculture, by Carl C. Taylor, Helen W. Wheeler, and E. L. Kirkpatrick.
- IX. Analysis of 70,000 Rural Rehabilitation Families, by E. L. Kirkpatrick.
- X. Standards of Living in Four Southern Appalachian Mountain Counties, by C. P. Loomis and L. S. Dodson.
- XI. Standards of Living of the Residents of Seven Rural Resettlement Communities, by C. P. Loomis and Dwight M. Davidson, Jr.
- XII. The Standard of Living of Farm and Village Families in Six South Dakota Counties, 1935, by W. F. Kumlien, C. P. Loomis, et. al. (Published by the South Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station, Brookings, South Dakota.)
- XIII. Standards of Living in the Great Lakes Cut-Over Area, by C. P. Loomis, Joseph J. Lister, and Dwight M. Davidson, Jr.
- XIV. Standards of Living in an Indian-Mexican Village and on a Reclamation Project, by C. P. Loomis and O. E. Leonard.
- XV. Standards of Living in Six Virginia Counties, by C. P. Loomis and B. L. Hummel.
- XVI. Social Relationships and Institutions in an Established Rurban Community, South Holland, Illinois, by L. S. Dodson
- XVII. Migration and Mobility of Rural Population in t] es, by Conrad Taeuber and C. E. Lively.
- XVIII. Social Relationships and Institutions in Seven Ne cities, by C. P. Loomis.

CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction and Summary	1
Chapter I LOW INCOME FARM FAMILIES	7
Number and General Conditions	7
Areas of Concentration	9
Conclusions	18
Chapter II HIRED FARM LABORERS	19
Number of Farm Laborers	19
Living and Working Conditions	20
Classes of Farm Laborers	26
Areas of Concentration	32
Conclusions	36
Chapter III FARM TENANTS	37
Number and Conditions of Farm Tenants	37
Areas of Concentration	48
Conclusions	54
Chapter IV FARM FAMILIES ON POOR LANDS	57
Number and Condition of Farm Families on Poor Lands	57
Areas of Concentration	62
Conclusions	70
Chapter V MIGRATING FARM FAMILIES	71
Number and General Conditions	71
Areas of Emigration (Out-Migration)	76
Migration, 1920 to 1930	76
Migration to and from Farms, 1930 to 1935	80
Conclusions	85
Chapter VI FARM FAMILIES ON RELIEF AND REHABILITATION	86
Number and General Conditions	86
Areas of Concentration	90
Rural Rehabilitation	101
Conclusions	106
Chapter VII FARM FAMILIES ON LOW STANDARDS OF LIVING	108
General Conditions	108
Areas of Concentration	115
Conclusions	122

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FOREWORD

This more or less impressionistic study of the "sore spots" in American rural life was made to reveal in broad outline the major factors that tend to reduce approximately one-third of the farm population of the Nation to submarginal standards of living. Because it attempts to survey rural social conditions throughout the Nation, it was necessary to confine the data used almost solely to such secondary sources as U. S. Census reports. The authors do not claim that the investigation is on the plane of scientific research for the analyses do not go deep enough to warrant such a claim. They hope that revealing the widespread prevalence of the conditions described, and delineating clearly the areas in which these conditions tend to concentrate, will lead to detailed analyses of the conditions and the areas.

The title, "Disadvantaged Classes in American Agriculture," one of a number of possible choices, was selected because it most nearly describes the arrangement of data, chapter by chapter, than any other title that was formulated. But it does not imply that the "classes" referred to are classes in the sense of castes, or that there is no social interchange between the farm families being discussed and other farm families in the same community, or with other farm families throughout the Nation.

Rural poverty has existed in considerable magnitude in the United States for a long time. The depression served to reveal the areas in which this poverty was most prevalent and most nearly chronic. Different agencies of the Federal Government in recent years have analyzed these conditions and areas from such standpoints as the land, farm income, and soil erosion. It is the purpose of this report to describe these conditions and areas in terms of farm families and the conditions under which they live.

Introduction and Summary

Within agriculture, as within every other great economic enterprise, persons and families are continually operating at all levels of success and failure. Agriculture is the most diversified economic enterprise in the world. It is carried on under the most varied and changing conditions possible and is subjected to risks of climate - weather and seasons - in a more direct way than any other. It would be strange if some of its entrepreneurs and many of its non-entrepreneurs were not at all times operating so near the margin of economic safety that a major economic depression would thrust them immediately below the poverty line.

This is exactly what happened in the recent depression. When the Federal Emergency Relief Administration was compelled to step into the breach because local communities, counties, and even States could no longer care for the distress, it was quickly discovered that about one million farm families were in destitution. Rather than to bemoan or criticize the appearance of Federal relief in rural districts for the first time in American history, it ought to be welcomed as a happy commentary that a determination has developed, on the part of the public and the Government, that farm people shall not be left to eke out a miserable existence or to live in utter destitution when economic catastrophe strikes.

By no means all farm families who appeared on the relief rolls in early 1935 were newly poor, and not all poor farm families were then nor have been at any time since, on these rolls. Farm people in the United States have never readily admitted their poverty and have always been slow to accept anything that savored of charity. Consequently they have never developed social machinery to discover their poverty or to care for it. The almshouse, a little out-door relief, and in rare instances Red Cross assistance in times of catastrophe have constituted their only means of relief. They have usually absorbed their distress in their own families, communities, and local church circles, and have been too proud to let others know of it.

Because each farm family lives in a degree of relative isolation and because American agriculture, in comparison with other enterprises, has always retained a high degree of economic self-sufficiency, the public at large has not been aware of the poverty that has constantly existed among farm people. Because it is not common to think of farmers as being unemployed and because economic distress and unemployment are so often thought of as universal corollaries, the fact is overlooked that merely living on a farm, especially living on a farm and in a house one does not own, is no proof of economic security, much less proof of economic and social well-being.

American rural life has always had its full quota of disadvantaged families, and although it is almost certain that the number has increased

in each succeeding generation, there has been, according to best estimates, considerable fluctuation in numbers from time to time. The fluctuation in the size of this disadvantaged group is probably to a marked extent a concomitant of the share of the total national income that goes to agriculture. This share varied between 1910 and 1925 from 10.8 percent to 18.5 percent. After 1925, it declined steadily to 1932 when it was only 5.7 percent. During this same period of 22 years, the size of the farm population, that is, those compelled to live upon agriculture's share of the national income, also fluctuated. Between 1910 and 1919, while agriculture's share of the national income was increasing, the amount of the farm population decreased about one-third of a million. From 1920 to 1930, during which period agriculture's share of the national income fell from 14.9 percent to around 10 percent, the farm population decreased by approximately another one and one-half million. During 1931 and 1932, the farm population began increasing for the first time in 20 years, but agriculture's share in the national income continued to decrease. Thus an increasing number of persons were compelled to live by agriculture at the very time when its share of the national wealth was at the lowest it has probably ever been in the history of the country. 1/ Even worse, the areas of heaviest farm population increases were the areas of poor lands and inadequate economic and social institutions.

The Nation cannot look with complacency at the fact that those rural areas in which the birth rate is highest are areas of marked disadvantaging conditions to those born and reared there, nor can it be unconcerned about rural slum conditions when it is well known that a large portion of the children of the Nation are born and reared on farms, many of them under conditions described in this report.

The gradual commercialization of agriculture, while modernizing it as an economic enterprise and making it possible for rural people to have many social amenities that were denied their parents and grandparents, has also thrust practically all farm families into the price and market system and has subjected them much more directly than in the past to economic depression. Consequently, falling farm prices, mortgage foreclosures, and mounting operating costs and taxes have contributed far more heavily to recent than to earlier rural life depressions. Furthermore, alternative opportunities are not so available today as in the times of past generations. When the panic of 1873 struck, and even at the time of combined drought and depression in the 1890's, there were still "free lands" to which the ever-increasing farm population could move with a fair promise of successful readjustment. This scene had sharply changed by 1930.

1/ Farm Population Estimates, January 1, 1937, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, U. S. Dept. of Agr., June 24, 1937. Ezekiel, Mordecai and Bean, Louis H., Economic Bases for the Agricultural Adjustment Act, U. S. Dept. of Agr., December 1933.

In addition to the disappearance of the frontier, which had occurred approximately two decades before the recent depression came, the fertility of the soil of many occupied areas was being rapidly depleted, and it was becoming apparent that hundreds of thousands of farm families were trying to make a living on land that should never have been subjected to cultivation. In other areas, it was apparent that farms were too small for successful economic operation. In still other areas, supplementary enterprises, especially lumbering and mining, had exhausted the natural resources and could no longer employ excess farm labor in their operations. To all of these changed physical conditions was added an ever-increasing number of tenants and laborers in the farm population and a steadily diminishing ownership of farm real estate equities by those who till the soil.

Sharecroppers and farm laborers have little underpinning of subsistence security to buttress them when cash farm income or wages decline. They have little in the way of livestock, poultry, or even gardens which furnish food supplies to the average owner-operator. They generally have no accrued savings or capital assets upon which they can draw, and so they quickly fall into pauperism.

The sore spots in rural life, as elsewhere, appear when the total economic machinery is subjected to heavy strain. Periods of depression bring into highlight conditions which, unobserved, have been in existence for a long time and they reveal the operation of disadvantaging factors that have been consistently tending to reduce the standards of living of thousands of farm families to marginal and submarginal levels.

In 1929, over one-fourth of the farmers in the Nation produced less than \$600 worth of products including the products of the farm used by the family. Nearly one-half produced less than \$1,000 worth of products. 2/ The story told in the pages of this report is not, therefore, solely the story of what happened to the people in agriculture during the depression. It is a fragmentary story of about one-third of the farm population which is constantly disadvantaged by one or more major conditions operating year in and year out in their lives. With the exception of one chapter (VI) and part of another (V), the data presented reveal the status of the disadvantaged groups in American agriculture previous to the depression. Most of the data reveal conditions as they existed in 1929 and earlier, not as they exist today or were at any time during the depression. They therefore reveal chronic sore spots and persistent problems, not merely emergency issues and

2/ Baker, O. E., A Graphic Summary of the Number, Size, and Type of Farm, and Value of Products, Misc. Publ. No. 266, U. S. Dept. of Agr., Oct. 1937, p. 68.

problems, and not issues that can be easily resolved.

It is probably shocking to those not well acquainted with these disadvantaged areas in rural America and especially to those who have been accustomed to thinking of rural life in idyllic terms, to realize that there are rural slums as well as urban slums. But if slum conditions mean poor housing, lack of household facilities and sanitation, ill health, insufficient income to buy even the physical necessities of life, and few or no opportunities to participate in the consumption of cultural goods and services, then rural slums are a reality in many sections; and in these rural slums, persons and families are denied some things which even great masses of people who live in city slums take for granted.

As a matter of fact, studies of thousands of urban and farm families show that American farmers have never lived on as high material standards of living as city families. Because of their isolation and the high degree of self-sufficiency that has existed in our farm enterprise, sometimes because of sheer physical isolation, they have not been able to have certain public utility services or the household and farm conveniences that go with them. An additional dynamic fact was that most farmers during earlier periods were striving to accomplish farm ownership and were willing to sacrifice modern conveniences and high material standards of living in order that they might become the owners of their farms and homes. Today, hundreds of thousands of them have lost these cherished farms and homes and other hundreds of thousands are aware of the fact that such ownership can be little more than wishful thinking.

The story told here by no means completes the story of the distress in rural America; it is not even a description of all of the factors and conditions that play constantly upon the lives of many rural families and tend to reduce them to low material levels of living. But it is frankly a story of the dark side of American rural life and an attempt to point out the geographic areas in which disadvantaging conditions prevail to the greatest extent. The reader should keep in mind that at no place do the writers contend that all farm families living within the areas described are disadvantaged or depressed. They do not even attempt to calculate consistently how many farm families there are in each of these areas or in all of them combined.

What they have done is to select seven indices to the prevalence of disadvantaging conditions. In the cases of low income, bad lands, tenant and hired labor status, the indices reflect causal factors; in the cases of relief and rehabilitation and low standards of living, they reflect results of disadvantaging conditions; in the case of migration, the facts probably represent little more than the general tendency of persons and families to move out of areas of relatively low opportunity and into areas that they expect or hope will offer them greater opportunities for economic and social well-being.

Because the purpose is to present something approaching a panoramic and more or less impressionistic picture of the outstanding sore spots and most pronounced disadvantaging conditions in American agriculture, it has been thought best not to use elaborate statistical data. The reader is pointed to the sources of such data, however, by means of many footnotes. The documents cited have been reviewed thoroughly by the authors who believe that the impressionistic picture presented here faithfully reflects what detailed data reveal. But the reader should keep constantly in mind the general nature of the data and the limitations in meaning of the various disadvantaging factors which the authors have been careful to describe throughout the report. He should keep in mind that the authors are not unaware of the bright spots in American rural life, but their whole intent is to set forth the opposite side of the picture.

By way of summary, the following eight paragraphs contain outstanding facts that are elaborated upon in the chapters which follow:

1. There were, in the United States in 1929, approximately 1,700,000 farms which yielded gross farm income of less than \$600, based on value of products sold, traded, or used; a few more than 900,000 farms that yielded less than \$400 income; and almost 400,000 farms that yielded less than \$250. On these farms yielding less than \$600 income, approximately 7,700,000 men, women, and children lived, whose lives were disadvantaged because of the lack of purchasing power.

2. There were among the gainfully employed persons in agriculture in 1930, approximately 2,700,000 hired farm laborers. The farm laborer is on the bottom rung of the so-called agricultural ladder and many farm laborers, apparently an increasing number, are destined never to rise above farm laborer status.

3. There were in 1935, 2,865,000 tenant families on American farms, the total members of which constitute a population of approximately 13,000,000 people. More than 700,000 were share-croppers, thus having status little if any above that of hired laborers.

4. There are more than a half-million farms in the United States on land that is so poor that it will literally starve the families living on it if they continue to try to make a living by farming it.

5. Approximately 3,000,000 persons move from farms to towns and cities or from towns and cities to farms each year. Over 1,000,000 farm families move from one farm to another each year. There is thus a tremendous mobility among the farm families of the Nation, indicating the constant attempts of hundreds of thousands of farm families to discover economic opportunities greater than those they have at present.

6. During the depression, at least $3\frac{1}{2}$ million, or more than 1 out of every 4, rural families in the United States had received public assistance at some time.

7. There are 240 counties in the United States in which 3 or more disadvantaging factors or conditions described in this report prevail and 769 counties where 2 or more of these factors or conditions prevail.

8. It is a conservative estimate that one-third of the farm families of the Nation are living on standards of living so low as to make them slum families.

Chapter I

LOW INCOME FARM FAMILIES

Number and General Conditions

Low income is the single, most powerful conditioning factor operating to reduce farm families to low economic and social status. Although it is not a complete index of economic and social welfare, it is a common denominator whereby different groups may be compared satisfactorily. Income, as the term is used here, includes all products sold, traded, or used by the farm family. 3/ It does not include earnings from non-farm sources, nor does it take into consideration the fact that in cases of share tenants, the farm products must be divided between the landlord and the tenant. In spite of these shortcomings, data on low income provide a good method of singling out a large group of farm families who are definitely disadvantaged because they do not have the means with which to adequately finance either farm operations or family consumption needs. It can hardly be questioned that farm families below a \$600 gross income level fall in this group.

An income of \$600 will not meet farm operating expenses and provide the essentials for even a minimum standard of living. Part of the \$600 income consists of home-used products which, of course, contribute directly to the family living. Out of the balance, which represents cash available during the year, must come expenditures for feed, seeds, fertilizer, taxes, and in many instances payments for livestock, machinery, and minor repairs, as well as for rent and mortgage-interest payments. After all farm expenses are met, there is seldom left as much as \$300 for living costs, and various studies that have been made prove conclusively that this is not enough to provide the necessary elements for a minimum standard for the farm family. 4/

3/ Fifteenth census of the U. S., Agriculture, Vol. 3, 1930.

4/ Duncan, O. D., and Sanders, J. T., A Study of Certain Economic Factors in Relation to Social Life Among Oklahoma Cotton Farmers, Exp. Sta. Bull. No. 211, Okla. Agr. Exp. Sta., Stillwater, Okla. Apr. 1933. Blalock, H. W., Plantation Operations of Landlords and Tenants in Arkansas, Bull. No. 339, Agr. Exp. Sta., Univ. of Ark., Fayetteville, Ark., May 1937. Dickins, Dorothy, Occupations of Sons and Daughters of Mississippi Cotton Farmers, Bull. No. 318, Miss. Agr. Exp. Sta., State College, Miss., May 1937. Anderson, W. A., Farm Family Living Among White Owner and Tenant Operators in Wake County, Bull. No. 269, Agr. Exp. Sta., N.C. State Coll. of Agr., Raleigh, N. C., Sept. 1929. Frayser, Mary E., A Study of Expenditures for Family Living by 46 South Carolina Rural Families, Bull. No. 299, S. C. Agr. Exp. Sta., Clemson College, S. C., Sept. 1934. Zimmerman, C. C., and Frampton, Merle E., Family and Society, A Study of the Sociology of Reconstruction, 611 pp., D. Van Nostrand Co. Inc., New York, 1935, Part III, American Studies, pp. 153-357.

Detailed studies of farm families' standards of living show that when the income is below \$1,000 per year, 59.9 percent of the entire budget must be spent for food and 92.8 percent must be spent for purely physical needs, excluding health. Families with incomes as low as \$600 per year cannot even have adequate food, clothing, and shelter, and their lives are inevitably robbed of practically everything except these bare physical necessities. In areas where 50 percent or more of the families live on this low income level, the area can hardly be described as anything but a rural slum. In such areas low-income families not only live under disadvantages themselves, but tend to pull down the level of the social and institutional life of the communities in which they live. 5/

When gross farm income is at the low level of \$600 per year, an increased proportion of the income naturally must go for food to provide even the barest essentials to sustain life. The housing of families at this income level offers only the very minimum of shelter and comfort and the clothing is anything but adequate. After the items of food, housing, and clothing are accounted for in the family budget, very little, if any, remains for so-called "advancement" items, including education, religion, recreation, charity, insurance, and health.

Although the average gross income per farm in 1929 was \$1,835, about 28 percent of the farm families of the United States in that year had less than \$600 (Table 1). Nearly 50 percent of the families received less than \$1,000 income for that year, and more than $6\frac{1}{2}$ percent fell in the income brackets below \$250.

These income data pertain only to operators, but all available information seems to indicate that wages of the great majority of farm laborers are well below \$600. Monthly wage rates as computed by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics for July 1937 ranged from \$32 to \$48 (without board) and \$23 to \$34 including board in the North Central

5/ Kirkpatrick, E. L., Needed Standards of Living for Rural Resettlement, A Survey of 290 Families in the Crandon Wisconsin Land Purchase Area, Mimeographed Report, Wis. Rural Rehab. Div., Resettlement Administration, May 1936. Williams, Faith M., Variations in Farm-Family Living, Economic and Social Problems and Conditions of the Southern Appalachians, Misc. Pub. 205, U.S. Dept. of Agr., 1935; The Cost of Living and Population Trends in Laurel County, Kentucky, and The Standard of Living of Farm Families in Grayson County, Kentucky, Merton Oyler, Bulletins 301 and 316, Ky. Agr. Exp. Sta., 1929 and 1931; Economic and Social Conditions of North Carolina Farmers, C. C. Taylor, and C. C. Zimmerman, North Carolina Department of Agriculture Tenancy Commission, 1923. Loomis, C.P., and Dodson, L.S., Standards of Living and Population Migration in Four Appalachian Counties, Farm Security Administration, U. S. Dept. of Agr. Sept. 1937. Beck and Forster, Six Rural Problem Areas, Res. Mono. I, Federal Emergency Relief Administration, Wash. D. C., 1935.

Table 1.- Cumulative number and percent of farm families according to income group, 1929

Income group	Farm families	
	Cumulative number	Percent
Total	5,999,882	99.8
Under \$250	397,517	6.6
" 400	915,549	15.2
" 600	1,681,667	27.9
" 1,000	2,927,351	48.6

Based on 1930 Census tabulation of value of farm products sold, traded, or used by operator's family. The farm income data presented were practically unaffected by the recent depression.

States. 6/ Many of the farm hands at these wage levels are not employed continually, and yet they are much better off than the casual or migratory workers in California, Florida, and other areas where the daily earnings vary from \$1.25 to \$2.50 per day and total employment does not exceed 5 or 6 months. Obviously, the yearly earnings of farm laborers are much less than \$600.

Approximately 7,700,000 persons lived in farm-operator households whose income was below \$600 in 1929. To these should be added an estimated 6,000,000 members of married farm laborers' families, the great majority of which have incomes below this level. Thus probably more than 13,000,000 farm persons are living in what might be called slum homes. Even more forbidding is the fact that of the 1,700,000 farm-operator families with incomes below \$600, approximately 900,000 had incomes of less than \$400 in 1929, and approximately 400,000 had incomes of less than \$250 (Figs. 1, 2, and 3).

Areas of Concentration

Farm families with gross farm income of \$600 or less per year are scattered widely throughout the Nation and can be found in all States and in almost all counties. They are much more prevalent, however, in some areas than in others, and in many counties they constitute more than 50 percent of all farm families. It is to what may be called the low-income counties and areas of the Nation that the reader's attention is here directed. He will note from Figure 4 that they tend to concentrate in well marked areas - the Appalachian-Ozark Highlands, the Cotton Belt, the Lake States Cut-Over, and northern New Mexico and Arizona.

6/ Crops and Markets, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, U. S. Dept. of Agr., July 1937, p. 145.

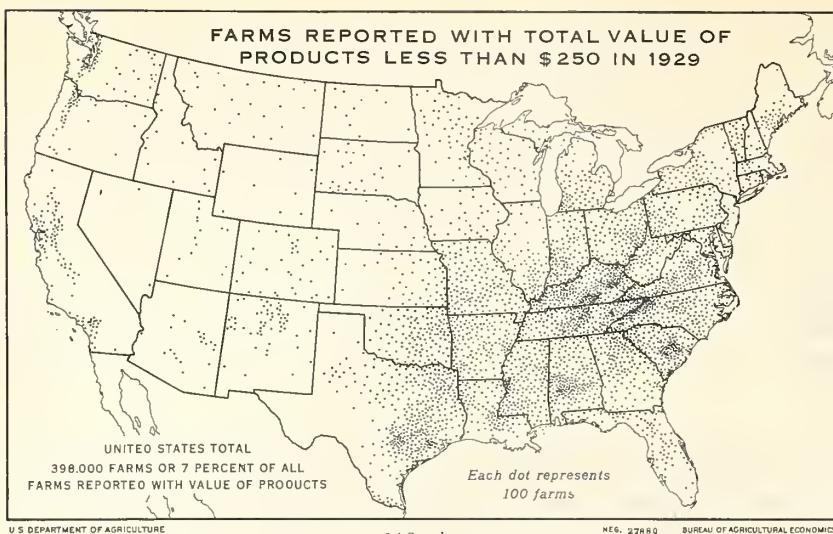


FIG. 1

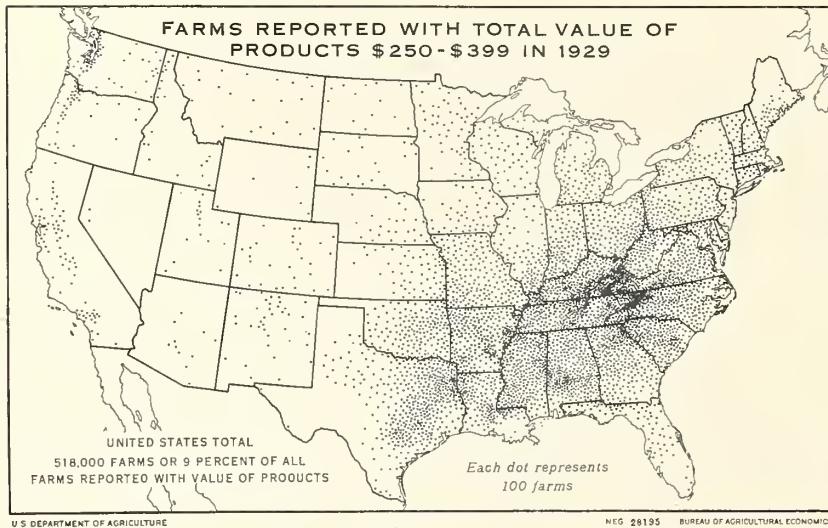


FIG. 2

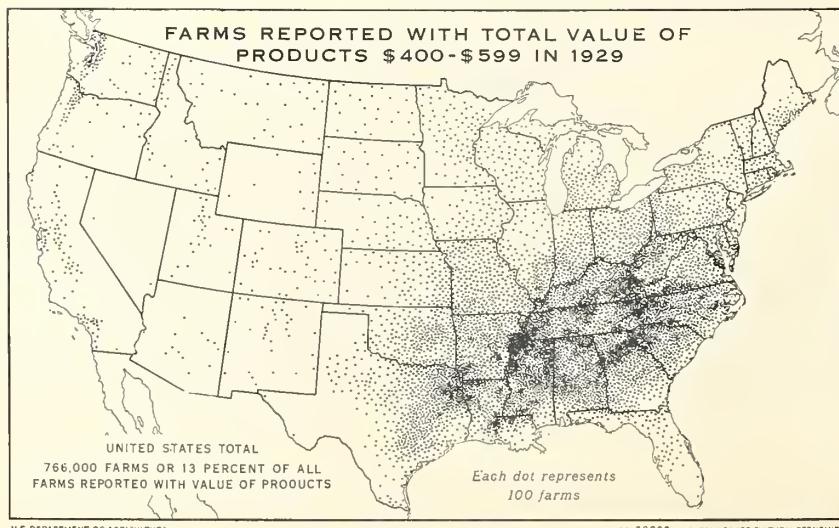
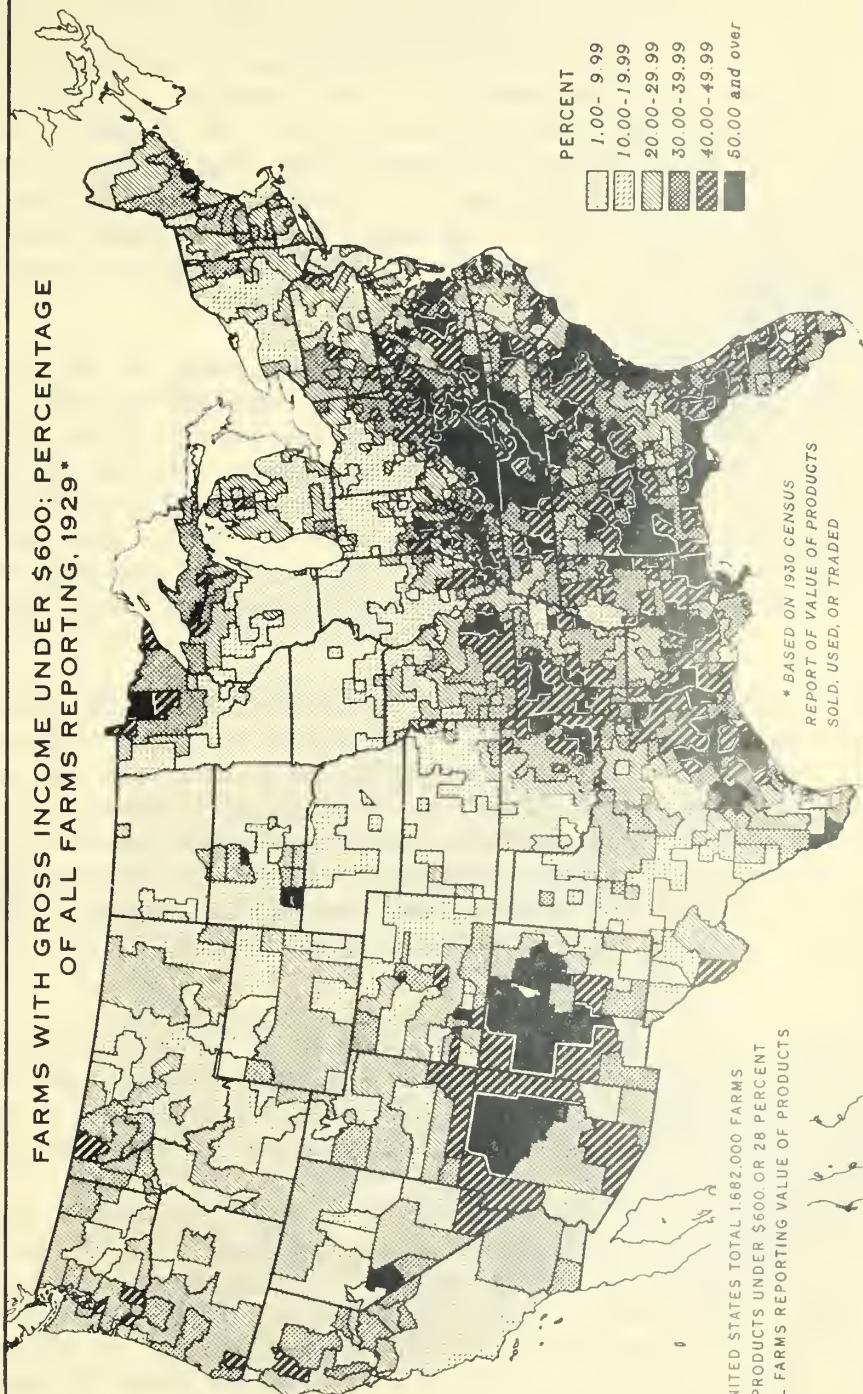


FIG. 3

NOTE ONE PAGE BULLETIN ILLUSTRATION

F FARMS WITH GROSS INCOME UNDER \$600: PERCENTAGE
M OF ALL FARMS REPORTING, 1929*



* BASED ON 1930 CENSUS
REPORT OF VALUE OF PRODUCTS
SOLD, USED, OR TRADED

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

NEG. 32909 BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS

F | G. 4

Appalachian-Ozark Highlands

The region of greatest concentration of low-income farmers extends throughout the Appalachian-Ozark Highlands. 7/ It encompasses the rugged sections of West Virginia and Kentucky, the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia and Tennessee, the Great Smokies of North Carolina, the hills of northern Georgia and Alabama, and the Ozarks of Missouri and Arkansas. In many counties in this great region, the majority of farm families had less than \$600 worth of products sold, traded, or used in 1929, and in no other area of the country does so large a percentage of the farm families fall to even lower levels of income, many of them in 1929 receiving less than \$250 gross farm income.

Self-sufficing farms in the Appalachian part of the area constituted more than 40 percent of the total in 1929 8/ and there is also a large proportion of part-time farm operators. (Figs. 5 and 6). It is thus an area with little cash farm income. Farms on which the gross receipts are largely from the sale of particular products (such as crop-specialty, cash-grain, animal-specialty, dairy, poultry, fruit, or truck) constitute about one-fourth of the total, in contrast to almost three-fifths accounted for in the self-sufficing and part-time classes. 9/

It is a region of small farms. Almost one-fifth of the farms in the Southern Appalachians are under 20 acres in size, approximately one-fifth are 20 to 50, more than one-fifth 50 to 100, and the remainder over 100 acres. Topographical features usually limit the acreage of land that can be used for crops and open pasture, so that in most instances farm operations are restricted, regardless of the size of holding. Thus, it is usually impossible for the family to make enough income from farming to provide more than the bare necessities of living.

7/ Areas of concentration are those in which 50 percent or more of all farm operators in given counties had less than \$600 income. Most of these counties, shown in black on the map, are surrounded by others in which the percentage of the total closely approaches them, that is, falls within the 37.50 to 49.99 percentage group.

8/ A self-sufficing farm, according to the U. S. Census (1930) is one where the value of products used by the family is 50 percent or more of the total; as a matter of fact, the total income in this region is so low that it is somewhat of a travesty to speak of these farms as "self sufficient" for they are by no means sufficient in terms of income of any kind. A part-time farm is one whose operator spends 150 days or more at work not connected with his farm or one for which the operator reports his occupation other than farmer if the value of the farm products does not exceed \$750.

9/ Hawthorne, H. W., op. cit.

NOTE: HALF-PAGE BULLETIN ILLUSTRATION

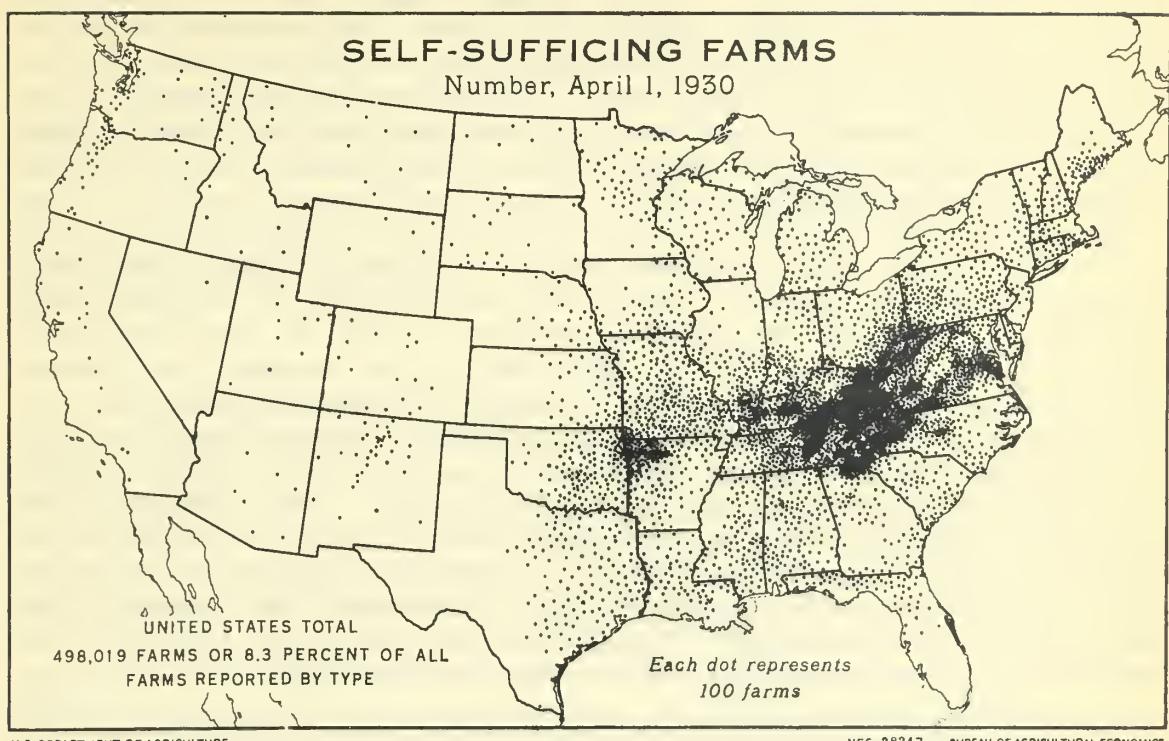


FIG. 5

NOTE: HALF PAGE BULLETIN ILLUSTRATION

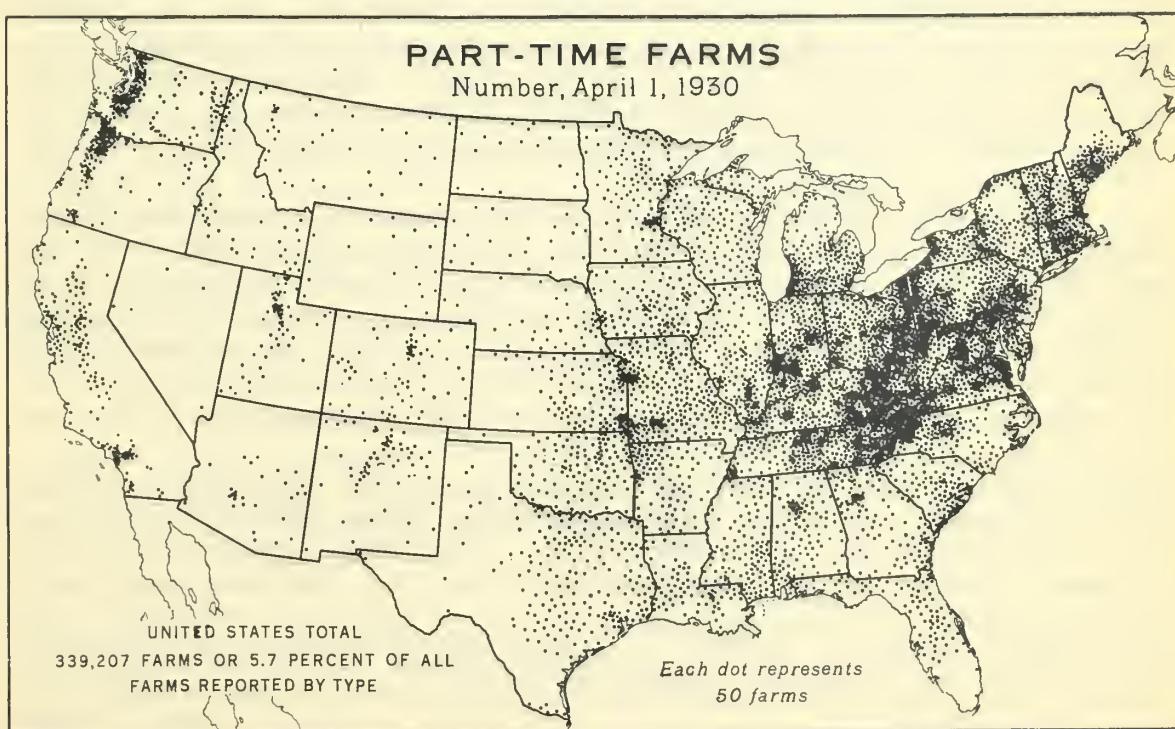


FIG. 6

A study of 138 farm families in a typical area of this region, Grayson County, Kentucky, in 1928, showed them to have a gross cash income averaging \$950. 10/ Against this were farm expenses averaging \$577 and family living costs averaging \$385, indicating that the entire number just about "broke even." But more than one-fourth of the families had incomes of less than \$500 and when reported farm expenses and family living costs were accounted for, they actually had an average deficit of almost \$200.

A similar study among 228 families in Knott County, Kentucky, in 1929 showed the total receipts from all sources to average \$518 per family. One-half of the families had incomes of less than \$400, and one-fifth less than \$200. Only one in six depended on farming for the major part of its living. Team work, coal mining, wood cutting, and store keeping were among the sources of outside income, averaging \$333 per family. Crops and livestock provided only \$165 per farm and this failed by \$42 to meet operating expenses. The study concludes that farming in this county, and the larger territory of which it is typical, cannot be made to "provide a livelihood even under favorable conditions of prices and markets. Without supplementary industrial or other non-farming occupation, the present population can be adequately supported only by contributions from other sources." 11/

A survey of conditions in the different Resettlement Administration submarginal-land-purchase areas of this State brought out the facts that 43 percent of the families studied there had less than \$100 income for the year 1934, and another 26 percent from \$100 to \$200; 23 percent reported incomes between \$200 and \$500 and only 8 percent more than \$500. Almost 30 percent had no income from livestock or its products and 70 percent had none from crops. The total cash income averaged \$232 per family with one-fifth of this from public aid. Approximately 60 percent of all the families were on relief. 12/

The Ozark country is similar to the Southern Appalachian Highlands. Although it has proportionately fewer counties with 50 percent or more farmers in the income level below \$600, practically the whole area is blanketed by those with at least 37.50 percent of the total farms in this classification. It is not so completely dominated by self-sufficing farms, but still has a relatively large number compared with all areas of the country, with the exception of the Southern Appalachians. Part-time

10/ Oyler, Merton, The Standard of Living of Farm Families in Grayson County, Kentucky, Bull. No. 316, Ky. Agr. Exp. Sta., 1934.

11/ Nicholls, W. D., and Rouse, W. L., Farm Organization and Family Incomes in Knott County, Kentucky, Bulletin 351, Kentucky Experiment Station, 1934.

12/ Morgan, Mack J., Report on 1935 Families Studied in Kentucky, Resettlement Administration, Lexington, Kentucky, pp. 23-24. (Unpublished)

farming is prevalent but not to the extent that it is in the Appalachians, nor in certain other parts of the Nation.

Notwithstanding the limited possibilities in farming, the population of this region, especially in the Appalachians, has a rate of natural increase which exceeds that of any other group of white people of comparable size in the United States. Thus, the pressure of population upon the means of subsistence is an outstanding influence for low standards of living and thus one of the major contributing causes underlying the disadvantaging conditions.

The Cotton Belt

The second important region of concentration of low income farms is in the Cotton Belt. Although not so concentrated in a solid area as the Appalachian-Ozark region, it is larger in total geographic extent. It is composed of the cotton and tobacco sections of South Carolina, the Piedmont of Georgia, the Black Belt and Clay Hills counties of Alabama, the lowland cotton and trucking areas of Mississippi, the sugar cane, berry, western rice and cotton lands of Louisiana, and the cotton, rice and Piney Woods portions of eastern Texas. Adjacent to the Cotton Belt are the eastern Flatwoods sections and the cotton counties of northern Florida. Although low-income farmers do not constitute the majority in as many counties as in the Appalachians, they do form a significant proportion of the total throughout this extensive region. There are relatively few self-sufficient or part-time farm operators and thus farm families receive very little income from non-farm sources.

Tenancy predominates throughout the region and agriculture is typified by the one-crop system. Cotton is the main crop. It accounts for more than one-half of the harvested area and for even a higher percentage of the income from products sold. 13/ Corn takes the next largest proportion of the crop land, but is usually grown only for work-stock feed and human consumption. Tobacco predominates on many farms in the eastern section and peanuts are grown in many areas for feed as well as a sales crop. Although in some instances farming is carried on by large enterprises (the plantations), the size of holdings generally operated by the owners as well as tenants is very small.

That the returns from farming are extremely limited among farmers at the low-income range is evident from a study among 300 families of Georgia, 1934. 14/ In Greene County, the average cash income was approximately \$300 for whites and \$150 for Negroes; in Macon County, it was

13/ Regional Problems in Agricultural Adjustment, U. S. Dept. of Agr., Agricultural Adjustment Administration Report, March 1935.

14/ Raper, Arthur F., Preface to Peasantry, Univ. of N. C. Press, 1936, p. 35.

\$870 for whites and \$300 for Negro farmers, but the larger figure in each case covered operating expenses on large acreages which were sublet to other tenants or worked by using wage-hand labor.

Another study of much broader scope, reaching more than 600 plantations throughout the South, shows that the annual net income of wage hands, other croppers, share tenants and renters averages \$309 per family. 15/ That for the laborers was \$180, for share croppers, \$312, and tenants \$417. As the figures for croppers and share tenants include the value of advances for sustenance during the year, the former received only \$122 and the latter \$202 in cash. Such low incomes for large families provide only a meager subsistence.

Whereas poor lands, so-called self-sufficient farming, and high birth rates constitute the major factors contributing to low income in the Appalachian-Ozark region, tenancy, cash-crop farming, and high birth rates constitute these factors in the Cotton Belt.

Northern New Mexico and Arizona

Low income predominates in many counties of north-central New Mexico and Arizona. In the number of farm families, however, this area is far less significant than either the Appalachian-Ozark or the Cotton Belt. It comprises the mountainous sections or highlands of these two States which are interspersed with small irrigated valleys. For the most part, the farm population consists of Mexicans and Indians, many of whom are not farm operators, but employed as laborers on the irrigated farms and herdsmen on large ranches.

No data are available to indicate the net income for families in this area, but information gathered in a survey of rural families on relief in 1934 in Union County, New Mexico, indicates that they need help and supervision "to start them on an income basis which is better than a mere existence. They can probably stay off relief by going back to the old subsistence days of a few goats, some sheep, cows and a couple of ponies, with a field for raising a little garden and some feed, but it is doubtful if the present generation will go back to the method of living of their fathers." 16/ A similar report for another New Mexico county states that a number of the families (truck gardeners) are in trouble because their acreages are too small, and because they have too

15/ Woofter, T. J., Jr., The Landlord and Tenant on the Cotton Plantation, Research Monograph V, Division of Social Research, Works Progress Administration, 1936, pp. 83-86. See also Taylor, C. C. and Zimmerman, C. C., op. cit.

16/ Rayner, O. S., and others, A Survey of Union County, New Mexico. Unpublished Report, Division of Social Research, Federal Emergency Relief Administration, Sept. 1934.

little equipment, and try to operate without adequate funds. 17/

The Lake States Cut-Over

The cut-over portion of the Lake States is another low-income area. Compared with the others, it is small in extent; only a few counties have as many as 50 percent of all farms below the \$600 income level. It is isolated in a vast region of higher incomes which makes it insignificant by contrast. If one-fourth or more of the families with less than \$600 income within a county is taken as a line of demarcation, the area comprises the 75 or 80 northernmost counties of Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. Roughly, it is characterized as an area of practically exhausted iron and copper mines, depleted forests, and cut-over lands of poor fertility. Many of the families settling in this area depended on income from outside sources to do their clearing, develop their homes, and insure their living. With curtailments in mining, and retrenchment in lumbering activity most of them found that their small tracts of cleared land could produce only limited incomes.

A recent study among representative farmers in a Federal land purchase area of this region shows the average gross cash income from all sources to be \$629. 18/ Less than one-third of this, or \$180, was from the farm. The operator's earnings from non-farm sources contributed almost as much as this, and even more with the inclusion of work relief, averaging \$57 per family for the group. General relief grants, including some drought aid and surplus commodities, accounted for \$157 of the total cash income, and miscellaneous receipts from the sale of lumber and other items, as well as contributions from different members of the family, made up the balance. Current farm expenses absorbed more than \$200 of the income. Capital goods in the form of work stock, machinery, and improvements took more than another \$100. Purchased family living items totaled more than \$500 in addition to the farm expenses, so that families were left with overdrafts or deficits averaging \$200, with two-thirds of the total number of families sharing the deficits.

Over-promotion by real estate salesmen and the accumulated residue of persons who came into the area to follow lumbering and mining have left a population too great for the present natural resources to support adequate standards of living.

Small Scattered Areas

Other scattered areas appearing in solid black in Figure 4, include

17/ McGill, K. H., and others, A Survey of Roosevelt County, New Mexico, Unpublished Report, Division of Social Research, Federal Emergency Relief Administration, Sept. 1934; Village Dependence on Migratory Labor in the Upper Rio Grande Area, Soil Conservation Service, Region VIII, July 1937; Tetreau, E. D., Seasonal Labor on Arizona Irrigated Farms, Coll. of Agr., Univ. of Ariz., Tucson, Ariz., 1937. (Mimeographed)

18/ Kirkpatrick, E. L., op. cit., p. 18.

western Nevada, sections of South Dakota, southern Maine, eastern North Carolina, and parts of Florida. Low income in these smaller areas is due to a number of diverse factors ranging from a combination of relatively poor lands and lack of moisture in Nevada and South Dakota to badly broken topography and thin soils in Maine, to heavy farm tenancy in North Carolina, and an excessive population on relatively poor soils in Florida.

Conclusions

The reader will be interested in noting the relationship between low income as a disadvantaging factor and the other disadvantaging factors or conditions that are described in the following chapters. Low income is prevalent in all of the bad-land areas; it pretty well blankets the southern tenancy area, but does not prevail in the northern tenant belt. He will observe that there is very little relationship between low income areas and heavy farm-labor areas, because the more prosperous farms in the Nation are the ones that employ the great mass of farm laborers, and because sharecropping is substituted for wage labor to a great extent throughout the Cotton Belt.

There is no universal correlation between low income areas and highly migrative areas, many of the low income areas being highly migrative during 1920 and 1930, but not so highly migrative between 1930 and 1935. Furthermore, the people in some of the best farming areas of the Nation were highly migrative in both periods.

Probably the point that will surprise him is that the low-income areas during the depression have not been the high relief areas. There were exceptions to this fact in the Appalachian Ozark and Lake States Cut-Over regions, but the large low-income belt of the Cotton States was not a high relief area, whereas the Prairie States, because of drought, were high relief areas. Evidently relief has been considerably more of an emergency measure than some people have been led to believe. It was not given in great quantities in low-income areas except in cases where economic or physical catastrophes had struck.

As would be expected, the low-income areas correlate well with the low standard-of-living areas. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, low income is the one most powerful factor operating to produce low rural standards of living.

Chapter II

Hired Farm Laborers

Number of Farm Laborers

The systematic, gradual path to land ownership, which has been virtually synonymous with success in agriculture, is allegedly accomplished by way of the so-called "agricultural ladder." The assumption is that the ambitious beginner starts his climb as a hired hand, serves an indeterminate apprenticeship in this capacity, then steps rung by rung from wage-worker to sharecropper, tenant, and eventual owner. Whether this process works or not, the farm laborer occupies the lowest rung on this agricultural ladder and is today finding it increasingly difficult to move up even to the next higher rung as sharecropper or tenant; the prospect of eventual land ownership is scarcely within the realm of possibility for the great majority.

Not only is the farm laborer's status at the bottom of the scale, but his living conditions, working conditions, annual income and degree of insecurity in the pattern of American rural life are relatively unknown. Not even his actual numbers are accurately known. It has been only within recent years that we have begun to learn a little about where and how he lives. In the course of events which have moved steadily away from frontier and free-land conditions, he has become the forgotten man in agriculture.

That the farm-labor group is a formidable one is clearly indicated by the fact that there were during January 1935 about 1,646,000 laborers who had worked 2 days on farms during the first week in January of that year. The Census enumeration was made during the time when hundreds of thousands of persons whose sole or chief occupation is farm labor were not employed, and many of them were not present in the farm population. The actual number must therefore be estimated. The agricultural labor class included almost one out of every five workers gainfully employed in agriculture in 1930. ^{19/} During the peak season in that year, there were over 2,700,000 paid farm laborers in the United States. If this number were swelled by those counted as croppers in the 1930 Census, the number would have been almost $3\frac{1}{2}$ millions. If, in addition, these included the 1,600,000 unpaid family workers reported in the 1930 Census, the number would have been over 5,000,000, exclusive of those migratory workers of whom there is no accurate count.

^{19/} One in four in 1929, 42 percent of all farmers employing hired labor at some time during that year. This figure does not include the migratory workers whose number has been estimated at between 200,000 and 350,000.

If, therefore, there are disadvantaging conditions which in general attach themselves to farm laborer status, the problem of mitigating or ameliorating such conditions is one of national scope and concern (Fig. 7).

Not all farm laborers are definitely disadvantaged or handicapped in the opportunity to advance to farm management or ownership. Some are young persons who are serving an apprenticeship in agriculture, so to speak, and will sooner or later find themselves renters or owners of farms. In the meantime, they are accumulating capital and experience, in keeping with the theory by which the agricultural ladder is presumed to work. However, with the ascent growing steadily slower and more difficult, many of them will never move above their present status. Many farm laborers are no longer young men, and even if they manage to climb to that next higher step, and into tenancy, they will be poor prospects for farm ownership. According to one study made on this point, over one-half of the farmers, prior to 1882, became owners when they were 21 to 25 years of age. In the years 1912 to 1922, only a little over one-fifth became owners at these ages. 20/ A U. S. Bureau of the Census report indicates that during a 30-year period, the length of time spent as wage hands by farm owners had increased from 4.2 years to 6.0 years. 21/

Living and Working Conditions

The farm laborers stand at the bottom of the social as well as the economic ladder. During periods of low farm-commodity prices they, together with other farm people, suffer a decline in annual income. During periods of pronounced depression, they must meet the competition of urban migrants seeking farm employment as well as other farm people who are seeking to supplement their depleted resources. During periods of high prices, the farm laborer's wages and perquisites increase, but he is not in a position to gain by rising land values, nor, because of competition for farms, does he find it easier to become a renter or owner.

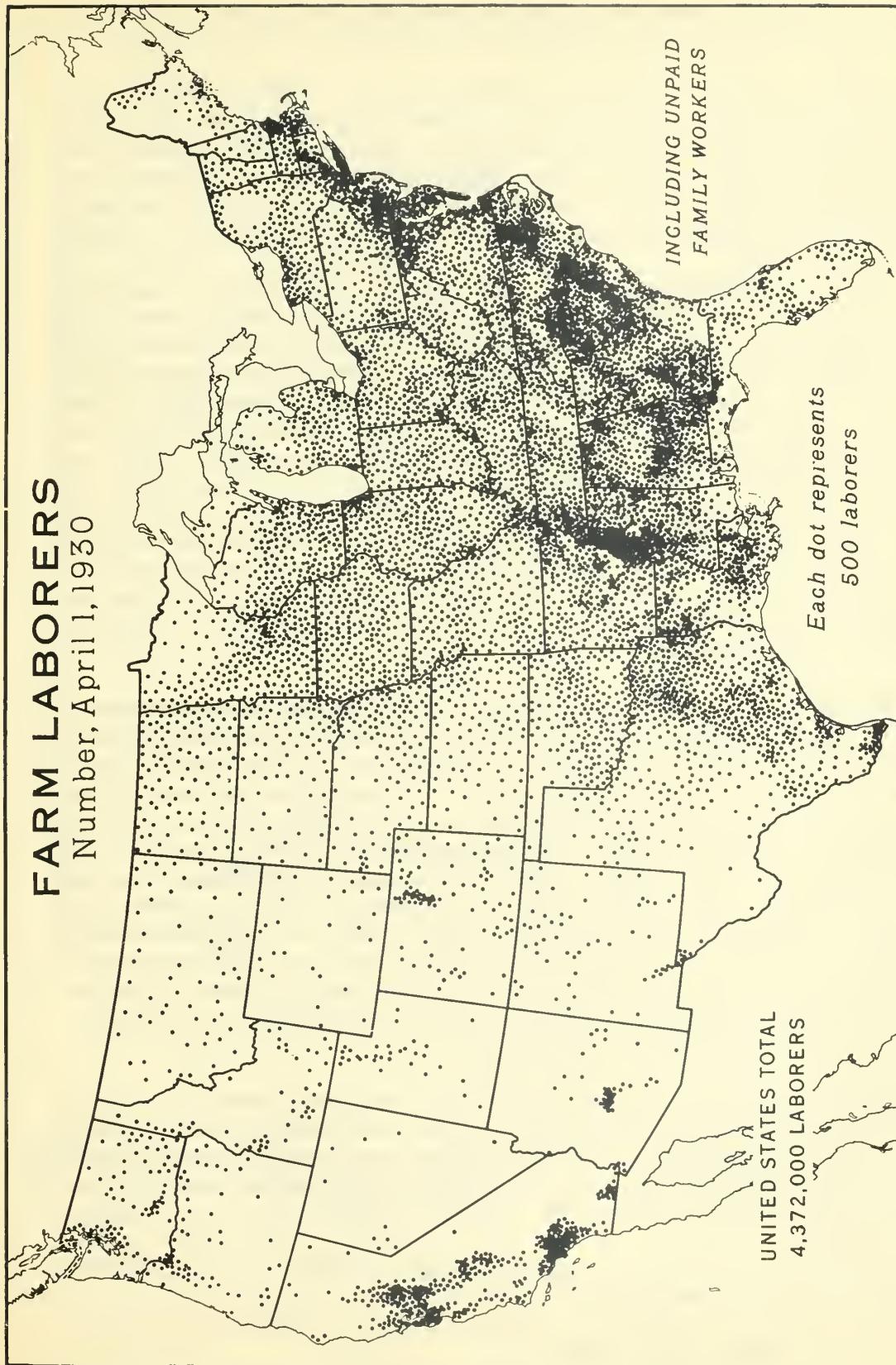
It is extremely difficult to draw an accurate picture of the farm laborer as he lives and works from day to day, for adequate social data on a national basis are not available and conditions vary considerably in different areas of the country and in types of farming that use hired labor. There is a difference in the status of a farm laborer, for example, when he is the son of a neighboring farmer and when he is one of even a small gang of laborers; there is a difference between resident croppers and migratory laborers, between permanent and seasonal laborers,

20/ Hibbard, Benj. H. and Peterson, Guy A., How Wisconsin Farmers Become Farm Owners, Bull. No. 402, Wis. Agr. Exp. Sta., Madison, Wis. Aug. 1928 p. 14.

21/ Goldenweiser, E. A. and Truesdell, Leon, E., Farm Tenancy in the United States, Bureau of the Census, U. S. Dept. of Commerce, 1924, p. 106.

FARM LABORERS

Number, April 1, 1930



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

NEG. 31467 BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS

FIG. 7. THIS MAP INDICATES THE NUMBER OF PAID FARM LABORERS DURING THE PEAK SEASON OF 1930, APPROXIMATELY 2,700,000, AND INCLUDES THE 1,600,000 UNPAID FAMILY WORKERS REPORTED IN THE CENSUS OF THAT YEAR.

and between those who work part-time on farms and part-time in other occupations and those who work altogether on farms.

The farm laborer at best is a young man who is working as a hired laborer only temporarily, while he is accumulating enough capital to buy a team of horses and some farm machinery in order to start farming as a renter. He is perhaps one of the neighbor boys who is working for a man whom he has known all his life. He probably lives as a part of that man's family and is definitely starting the climb up the agricultural ladder.

At worst, these laborers are part of that great mass of migratory farm workers whose paths weave a network over three-fourths of the States in this country (Fig. 8). The living conditions of this latter group are admittedly deplorable and shocking, described by the Secretary of Labor as "a threat to the development of good citizens." 22/ Their unfortunate situation is accentuated by the prejudice of local communities against absorbing migrant workers, both because of their undesirability and because it will probably increase their relief burden and other community expenses. They lack health protection and school opportunities, and have difficulty in getting public relief because they have no legal residence. Frequent campaigns to enforce local vagrancy ordinances, and the exercise of border controls against their interstate migration add to their difficulties. There is no opportunity for community participation of any kind.

Housing of seasonal farm laborers is inadequate in most sections. In the mid-western farming area, the worker is usually furnished at least a decent place in which to live, but in the South, housing conditions of permanent laborers are notoriously poor. As described by one writer, "They stay in shacks, thousands of which are unfit to house animals, much less human beings." 23/ Seasonal labor is found housed in "the veriest makeshift - improvised habitations made up of boxes, burlap, brush, or packing cases - to groups of substantial frame or adobe cottages." 24/ Self-housing is nearly always crude and employer-housing varies greatly from tiny shacks and row houses up to a more substantial type. Excessive rents are often charged and sanitary facilities are generally lacking. These factors all tend to make the hired farm laborer's standard of living almost universally low.

Many farm laborers cannot, or do not, even send their children to school. They do not know the stability and security of being a real integral part of a community, and therefore enjoy almost no social participation of any kind. They are a socially isolated, sometimes shifting, sometimes stagnant group, without anchor, without keel, and without

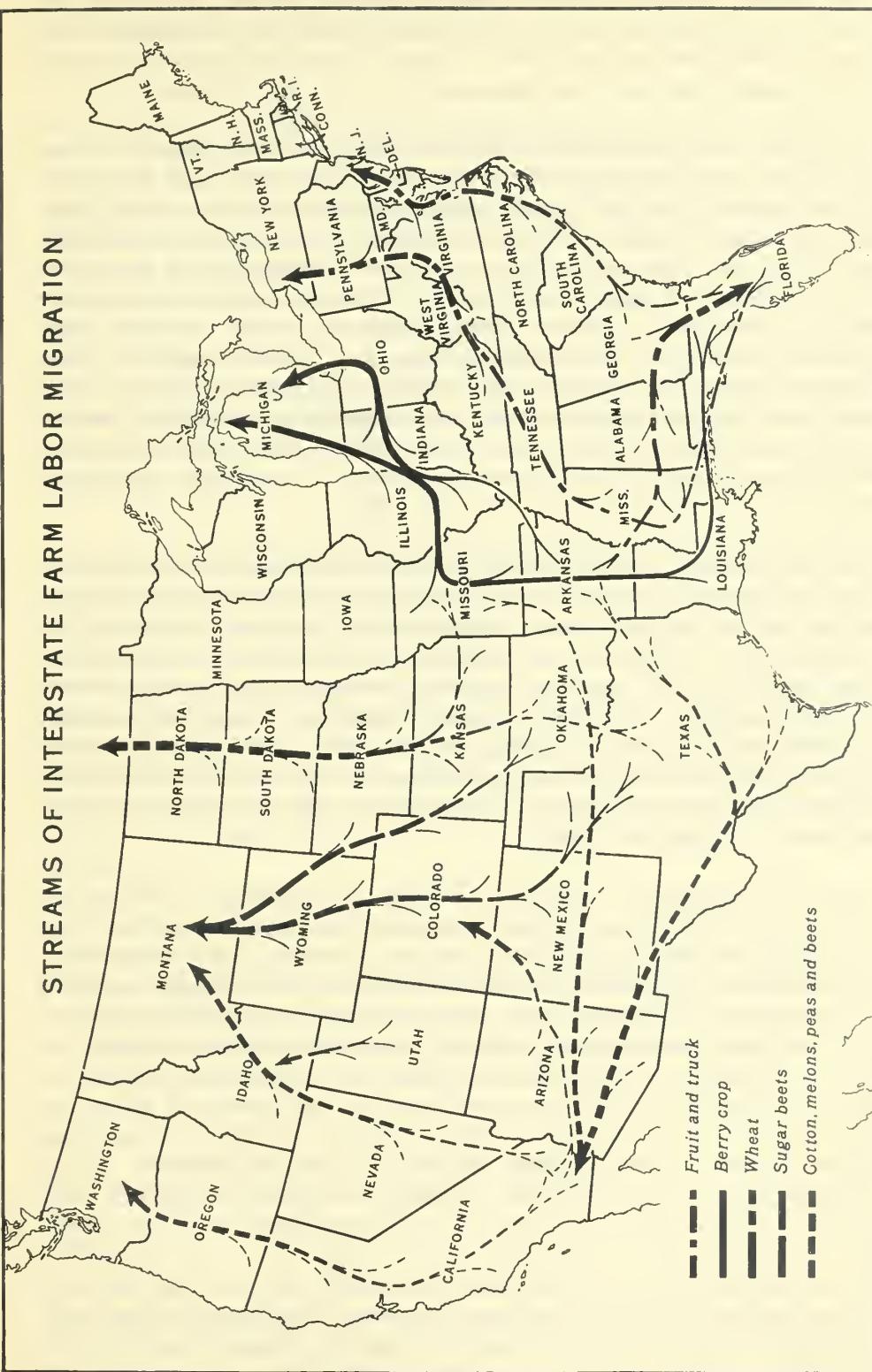
22/ Tolles, N. A., A Survey of Labor Migration Between States, Monthly Labor Review, Vol. 45, No. 1, July 1937.

23/ Johnson, Embree, Alexander, Collapse of Cotton Tenancy. 81 pp. Univ. of N. C. Press, Chapel Hill, 1935.

24/ The President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership 1932, p. 197-8.

STREAMS OF INTERSTATE FARM LABOR MIGRATION

- 23 -



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

FIG. 8. Every year hundreds of thousands of farm laborers cross state lines to follow the crops in their harvest seasons. This map is by no means a complete picture of this migration whose network encompasses more than three-fourths of the states in the Union. It represents only interstate migration and does not attempt to include any movement which is wholly within a single state. There is relatively little reliable information available as to exactly where the migrant stream begins, how large it is at various points along the way, and where it ends. It is probably safe to say that workers drift into the stream from many points and drift out again all along the way; probably comparatively few travel the entire distance represented by any one of these streams. The data from which this map was made are to be found in an article by Paul S. Taylor, "Migratory Farm Labor in the United States," in the Monthly Labor Review, March 1937.

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BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS

direction. They do not enjoy adequate legal protection by the State or Federal Governments, and often do not have local standing sufficient to give them social or business protection. Their lot is to eke out a mere existence now and apparently in the future.

Another factor that contributes considerably to their general condition of instability, particularly among the migratory seasonal workers, is the lack of direction and guidance available to them in their job-hunting. They are ineffectual in locating new jobs, often incurring a serious expenditure of time and meager resources, because the means of finding jobs are haphazard and unorganized. These workers must rely for job information chiefly on chance, rumor, gossip, radio, letters from previous employers, posters, and advertisements. Labor agents, fee-charging employment agencies, private and public employment offices in a great many cases work to the advantage of the company or employer rather than the worker, the system involving such abuses as excessive fees charged by the agents, high transportation costs to the job, and even misrepresentation of the availability of jobs. 25/

Although the annual income of the agricultural worker fluctuates considerably, especially in the case of the migrant worker, it is almost without exception far below the level required for a decent standard of living. According to a survey in 10 counties in 8 States in different sections of the country, the average annual earnings of farm laborers ranged between \$125 and \$347 for the crop year 1935-36. These incomes may have been supplemented by certain perquisites, but they also include earnings from other sources and relief payments if any were received, and are clearly inadequate for a standard of living that would include health, comfort, contentment, or saving. 26/

The income of seasonal, migrant workers is greatly affected by such factors as supply of available labor, weather conditions, prevailing wage rates, markets, and the size of the crop or harvest. It is impossible to make any definite statement as to the income of seasonal workers because of the tremendous fluctuation in earnings and the lack of adequate information. It has been estimated, however, that the average annual income for adult men is \$300 and for families \$400. If we were to assume an average of 2 workers and 4 to 5 persons per family, an income of \$400 per year would mean less than \$100 for each member of the family. In the case of family contract labor, as with sugar beets, 6 to 8 members of a family may not earn more than from \$200 to \$400 from beet work with very

25/ See Report of the Secretary of Agriculture, 1937, pp. 39, 40, and 41; Black, A. G., Farm Security - VII. The Farm Laborer, The Agricultural Situation, Vol. 21, No. 11, Nov. 1, 1937, pp. 15 and 16; Report on Social Problems of Migrants and Their Families Summarized, Vol. 2, No. 2, Children's Bureau, U. S. Dept. of Labor, Aug. 1937.

26/ Report of the Secretary of Agriculture, 1937, p. 38.

little opportunity to supplement their earnings from other sources of employment. 27/

Annual earnings vary greatly not only between States, but between counties in a State, as well as within a county. According to a study made in 1936 of 11 counties in different parts of the country, the average reported ranged from \$62 among female Negro cotton pickers and \$178 among male Negro cotton pickers in Louisiana, and \$125 among white male workers in a Tennessee county, to \$347 among the white laborers in Pennsylvania, and \$748 among the Orientals in Placer County, California. The largest average incomes were reported by the Oriental workers in the California sample, but the amount available per family member in this group was only \$163 per year. The average earnings of the southern workers interviewed were only slightly over half the earnings of the northern workers; in no southern county studied was as much as \$100 available per person annually, while the northern workers reported an average of at least \$125 per person. 28/

The average (median) family income of the more fortunate, including the California camp-workers, the western sugar beet workers, and the workers in the Yakima Valley, Washington, was \$400 (\$437 for 1934-35, \$406 for 1935, and \$357 for 1934-36 for these 3 groups). Unattached men averaged \$288 a year. One hundred agricultural workers, out of 500 workers who received aid from Federal transient bureaus, had net earnings of less than \$110 in 1933 and less than \$124 in 1934. 29/ It is obvious therefore that these agricultural workers are forced to supplement their earnings from other sources or to live below a decent standard of living, and with the supply of agricultural labor greater than the demand, attempts at organization to bargain for better wages and working conditions are usually futile.

The working day for the agricultural laborer is long, frequently from sunrise to sunset or later, and sometimes chores must be done in addition to field work. Traveling to and from work often adds still more to a day already too long. There is some variation in the average length of the working day according to type-farming areas, but the range is from about 9 hours, plus time devoted to chores, in the Cotton Belt and Corn

27/ Village Dependence on Migratory Labor in the Upper Rio Grande Area, Soil Conservation Service, Region 8, July 1937; Sugar Beets, Changes in Technology and Labor Requirements in Crop Reduction, Nat'l. Research Project, Rpt. No. A-1, Works Progress Administration, Phila., Pa., Aug. 1937.

28/ Agricultural Situation, October 1, 1937, based on series of Farm Labor Studies by Tom Vasey and J. C. Folsom, Farm Security Administration and Bureau of Agricultural Economics, U. S. Dept. of Agr., Sept., Oct., and Nov. 1 937.

29/ Tolles, N. A., A Survey of Labor Migration Between States, Monthly Labor Review, Vol. 45, No. 1, July 1937.

Belt to 11 and 12 hours in the small-grain and dairy areas. The actual working hours are practically the same for operators and hired men in all areas except the Cotton Belt where the hired men usually work longer in the fields and farm operators spend more time in the doing of chores. From available data, it appears that there has been some general decline in the total length of the farm day in the northern and eastern States, but this has probably amounted to less than 1 hour's decrease since 1920. The length of the working day is influenced to a certain extent by the age of the farmer, although there is little change up to 50 years of age. After 60 years, the hours devoted to farm work grow shorter and shorter.

30/

Classes of Farm Laborers

Farm laborers as a whole may be divided into five groups for purposes of description. First of all, there is the typical hired man, a figure rapidly disappearing from the agricultural scene as he is being replaced more and more by the seasonal worker and by the use of time- and labor-saving machinery. He plays, whether married or single, a lonely and solitary part because of his almost complete lack of opportunity for community participation. If married, the members of his family are usually forced to work too, and if it is necessary for them to work part of the year elsewhere, the children cannot have uninterrupted schooling or the recreation to which they are entitled. If single, the hired laborer frequently seeks entertainment to fill his few leisure hours in nearby villages and towns, rarely taking any part in community activity as such. He enjoys relatively little companionship with others of his own kind and even if he is married he participates little in church, lodge, or other social life of the community.

There are also the large groups of wage workers who are employed on farms hiring two, three, or more laborers. While in January 1935 there were only 107,000 farms reporting three or more laborers (11.1 percent of all farms reporting hired labor and 1.6 percent of all farms), nearly 650,000 laborers were employed on these farms, or almost 40 percent of the total number of laborers. Estimates for July of that year, however, show an increase from 107,000 farms reporting three or more laborers to nearly 184,000 farms and more than 1,156,000 hired laborers on these farms, bringing the percentage up to about 43 percent in this peak season.

The third group represents the woman and child labor, particularly widespread in the sugar-beet and other industries, in which contracts are based on acreage to be harvested rather than on an individual laborer's time. Contract labor has given rise to the practice of a man's

30/ Hopkins, John A. and Newman, Wm. A., Length and Changes in Farm Work-Day, Rpt. No. 54, U. S. Dept. of Agr., Jan. 1937.

carrying out his contract by bringing his whole family into the fields to help him. Low wage levels in the truck and fruit-crop industries have made it necessary for more than one member of the family to work, and unskilled piece-work has offered opportunities to many women and children to supplement the family income.

In 1930, 70 percent of the children, aged 10 to 15 years, who were gainfully employed in the United States were engaged in agricultural pursuits and it is highly probable that many more than the 171,000 women reported as working for wages on farms by the 1930 Census were actually engaged in such work, especially during the summer or harvest period of that year. The Children's Bureau has estimated that between 1920 and 1924 there were 13,500 children doing farm work in 14 States alone, chiefly in sugar-beet growing in Michigan and Colorado; cotton growing in Texas; truck and small-fruit areas in southern New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia, Illinois, Washington, and Oregon; in the wheat, potato-raising, and grazing sections of North Dakota; in the Illinois part of the Corn Belt; and in the tobacco-growing districts of Kentucky, South Carolina, Virginia, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. 31/ In California alone, in 1927, approximately 37,000 migratory children were engaged in agricultural work. In that year, more than 100,000 Mexican children were reported as part of the school population, 85 percent of whom were engaged in seasonal labor, following the crops from place to place. Considerable casual woman and child labor is hired all through the Cotton Belt and intensified fruit and truck crop areas of the country.

The women who are hired in agriculture do not enjoy the legal protection that is generally furnished to the industrially employed. 32/ They are exempt from accident compensation laws of most States, and yet they are exposed to all the hazards of seasonal employment, to long hours and excessive over-time, unstable employment, and variations in wage payments, which are largely unstandardized. 33/

Child workers in agriculture are automatically retarded in their schooling if indeed attendance at school is possible at all. Retardation of children among migratory workers has been estimated at twice that of

31/ Research in Farm Labor, Scope and Method Series, J. D. Black, Editor, Social Science Research Council Bull. No. 16, New York City, June 1933.

32/ Women and child workers in agriculture are not provided for in the Social Security program; the only legislation of a protective nature for children in agriculture is the Agricultural Adjustment Administration Sugar Act of 1934, which prohibits the use of labor of children in families under contract with the Federal Government.

33/ Black, J. D., op. cit.

ordinary city children, 34/ largely because of the loss of a month at each end of the school year, "crop vacations," adjustment to grading by transfer to different schools, fluctuation in attendance during periods enrolled, and lack of real compulsion for their attendance. Local school boards and parents of resident children are often indifferent or even opposed to having migratory children attend their schools.

What formal schooling is available to these boys and girls is placed at a disadvantage because of the discrimination against them, the low economic conditions of their families who are able to provide only poor and insufficient food, who frequently have low moral standards, and who need the additional income made possible by their children's labor. This employment means long hours of work, averaging about 9 hours a day and as high as 14 hours a day in some cases, 35/ irregular hours of sleep, little if any recreation, and resultant physical handicaps and disease. 36/ These children are virtually nomads, never knowing the security and stability of living in a real house instead of a shack or tent. They know little of the protection and pleasure of parental care and attention, or of lasting friendships with playmates. Like child laborers everywhere they live drab, monotonous, tedious lives and in the due course of events find themselves in blind alleys. They possess neither the time nor the facilities for recreation, art, or music. Their's is not the happy, carefree youth which should be the rightful heritage of American childhood - their's only to help their struggling families to wrest a miserable existence from the soil by the only means they know.

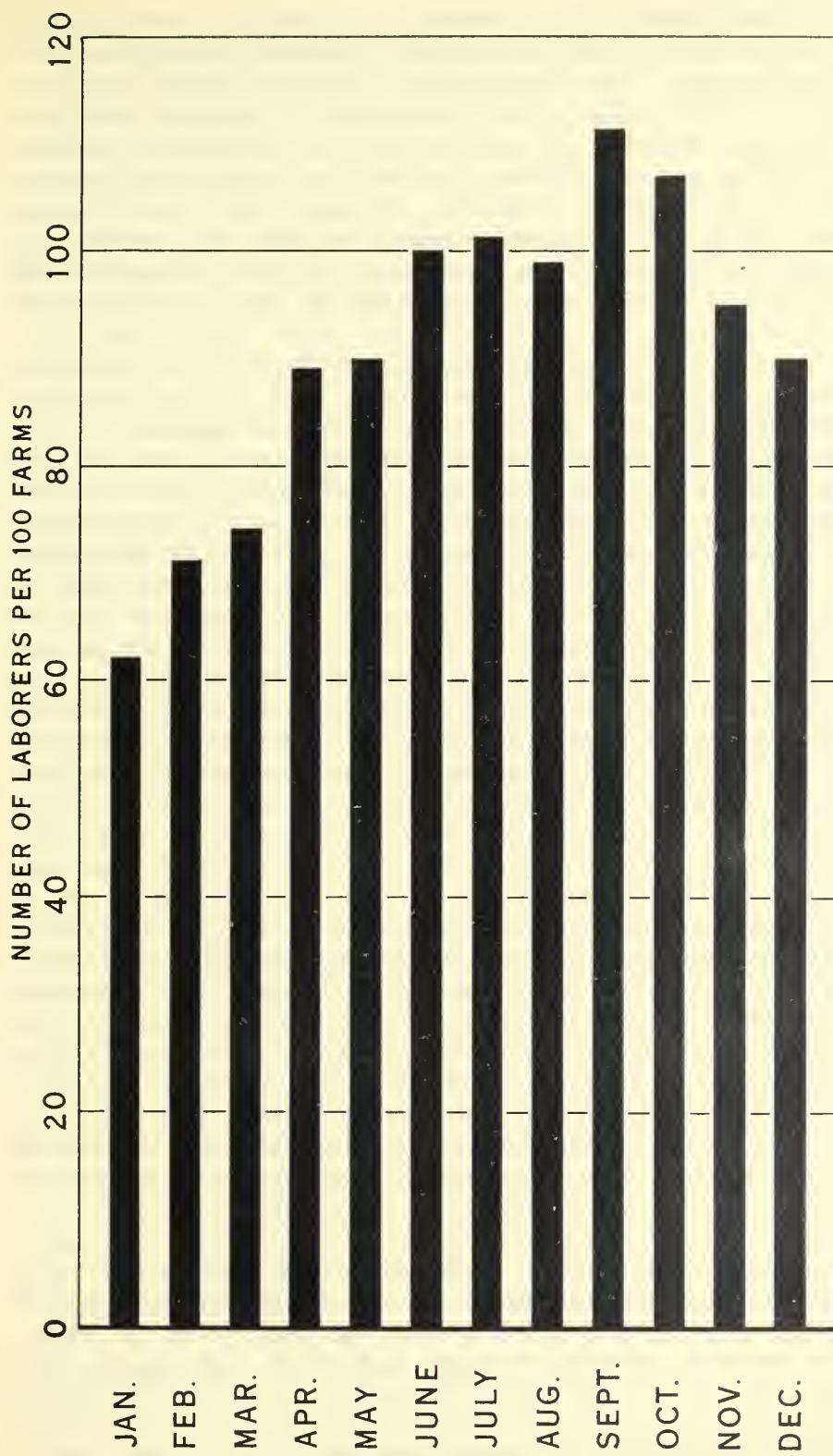
A large part of the demand for farm labor is seasonal, thus often requiring that laborers and their families be migratory workers. The fact that the hired laborer in most sections of the country is called in to supplement unpaid family labor, to meet seasonal demands, causes the farm laborer to be more of a seasonal worker than is true in most occupations. He is called in by the tens of thousands to assist in carrying the peak loads in agriculture, but once the peak periods are past, he is dropped from employment by the tens of thousands. (See Figure 9 for peak periods in hired labor.)

Little is known about migratory farm laborers except that many of them move almost ceaselessly throughout the year in search of work, and that this search takes them not only great distances, but in some cases into a number of States. Many of them are small farmers or mill-

34/ Mangold, George, The Migratory Child Workers in Migratory Child Workers, Publ. No. 354, Nat'l. Child Labor Com., New York, 1929.

35/ Mautner, Abbot, et al, Child Labor in Agriculture and Farm Life in the Arkansas Valley of Colorado, Nat'l. Child Labor Com., 1929.

36/ Hill, Lillian B., Education of the Migrant Child, in Migratory Child Workers, Publ. No. 354, Nat'l. Child Labor Com., 1929.



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FIG. 9. ONE OF THE MOST SERIOUS PROBLEMS CONFRONTING THE AGRICULTURAL WORKER IS THE HIGHLY SEASONAL NATURE OF HIS EMPLOYMENT THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.

BASED ON THE NUMBER OF HIRED LABORERS PER 100 CROP REPORTING FARMS IN 1936, THE MONTH OF LOWEST EMPLOYMENT IS JANUARY AND THE HIGHEST IS SEPTEMBER, THE NUMBER RANGING FROM ONLY 62 HIRED LABORERS PER 100 FARMS IN JANUARY TO 111 IN SEPTEMBER.

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BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS

hands, seeking to supplement their incomes by seasonal farm labor. Many of them travel about in second-hand cars with their whole families, all looking for employment. In California, a large proportion of the migratory workers are of foreign stock - Mexicans, Filipinos, and Japanese - while in Florida, Negroes are competitors with whites for seasonal farm work. Some areas, such as those in which the sugar-beet industry is located in Colorado, Wyoming, Nebraska, Kansas, and other States, draw on two types of migratory workers, those who come from nearby villages and towns for the whole season, and those who are permanently on the move from one crop to another and one part of the country to another.

The place of the migratory agricultural worker in the scheme of the rural economy is not enviable. His income even during the short working season is both low and insecure. It is low because foreign workers who have been willing to accept such wage rates have set the rate and because there is a great over-supply of this type of labor. It is insecure because of the uncertainty of the crops, the weather conditions, and the market, which will determine the size of the crop to be harvested. His working conditions are unfavorable and his standard of living is extremely low. His period of employment averages from only 40 to 60 percent of the year. His ascent up the agricultural ladder is next to impossible because he is unable to accumulate savings to build up the necessary capital, and he does not remain long enough in one place to be able to establish himself as a good credit risk. He lives in the community but is not a part of it. He is homeless, jobless part of the time, and voteless. 37/ Security and stability are not within his reach.

There is no single type of person who can be considered as "typical" of migratory workers - migrants are of all races and ages, single and married, traveling about alone or with entire families. An increasing proportion who are moving across State lines are native white Americans, members of families, relatively young, and highly employable. It has been estimated from Census data that over 9,000,000 persons moved across State lines at least once during the decade 1920-30, about equally divided between domestic and foreign migrants. The greatest and most incessant migration at present is among the migrant workers in California, but the greatest potential source of future migration in the United States is found among the tenant farmers of the southeastern Cotton Belt. 38/

The chief agricultural areas in which migratory workers are to be found are the cotton and vegetable areas of the Southwest; the apple, hop, and berry areas of the Pacific Northwest; the pea fields of Idaho; the beet fields of Colorado, Montana, Wyoming, and Idaho; the berry fields

37/ Hathway, Marion, *The Migratory Worker and Family Life*, Soc. Serv. Mono. No. 21. 240 pp., Univ. of Chi. Press, Chicago, Ill., 1934.

38/ Tolles, N. A., *A Survey of Labor Migration Between States*, Monthly Labor Review, Vol. 45, No. 1, July 1937.

of Arkansas; and the citrus and vegetable localities of Florida. It is estimated that the number of migratory men, women, and children following the various crops in California alone may have been as high as 150,000 in recent years. 39/

Another type of farm laborer is known in the Census as "Croppers"; in other words, those tenants whose landlords furnish all the work animals and pay them by means of part of the crops they produce. They are really not tenants, because they exercise no managerial authority regarding the farm on which they work. They operate the owner's farm according to his plans, and in return for what he furnishes them, they receive pay in "kind instead of cash."

Many present-day sharecroppers have slipped back into cropper status through loss of land ownership or capital investments, or because of reversals or misfortune. There are Negroes and poor whites; there are former owners and former tenants; there are young people who are just beginning farming; and there are older people who have never escaped from cropper status.

The independence of the sharecropper is, by and large, only nominal, and his cash income is generally too low to give him much chance of bettering his economic status. The amount of his share depends upon how many of the elements of production he himself has furnished and how much he has accepted from the landlord - and the landlord keeps all the records. He has little incentive to save his money if he does earn any above what he owes the landlord, because on the amount of his indebtedness sometimes depends his very tenure with that employer.

That agricultural labor often assumes the proportions of what may be called "gang labor," especially during the harvesting or peak seasons of employment, is clearly indicated by the large numbers employed at one time in the areas of heavy concentration of hired labor. In central and south Texas, Oklahoma, Arizona, and California, where only 3 percent of the Nation's cotton is produced, 47 percent of the large-scale cotton farms of the entire country are located, and more than one-third of all the large-scale farms of the entire country were located in California in 1930. The California Emergency Relief Administration has estimated that in 1935 in that State, 198,000 laborers were needed at the harvest peak in 33 agricultural counties, 50,000 of these being non-resident of the county where the crop grows. This great mass of workers has grown into what has been called a "semi-industrialized rural proletariat." 40/

39/ Taylor, Paul S., Migratory Farm Labor in the United States, Monthly Labor Review, U. S. Dept. of Labor, Vol. 44, No. 3, March 1937. See also Hoffman, C. S., Drought and Depression Migration Into Oregon, 1930 to 1936, Monthly Labor Review, U. S. Dept. of Labor, Vol. 46, No. 1, Jan. 1938.

40/ Taylor, Paul S., and Vasey, Tom, Historical Background of California Farm Labor, Rural Sociology Journal, Vol. I, No. 3, Sept. 1936, p. 283.

Although all multiple units of labor do not represent gang labor, nevertheless the high percentage of farms employing 3 or more hired hands tends to be of the industrialized or gang type of agricultural labor. For the United States as a whole, 43.9 percent of the total number of hired farm laborers reported by the January 1935 Census were then on farms with only one hired hand, 16.7 percent were on farms with 2 hired hands, and 39.4 percent with 3 or more hired laborers. This is, of course, during the month of smallest farm employment. It is estimated that during the peak season, August, the total number of hired farm laborers on farms with 3 or more had increased from 647,617 to 1,191,624 and the percentage had increased from 39.4 percent to 43.3 percent. 41/

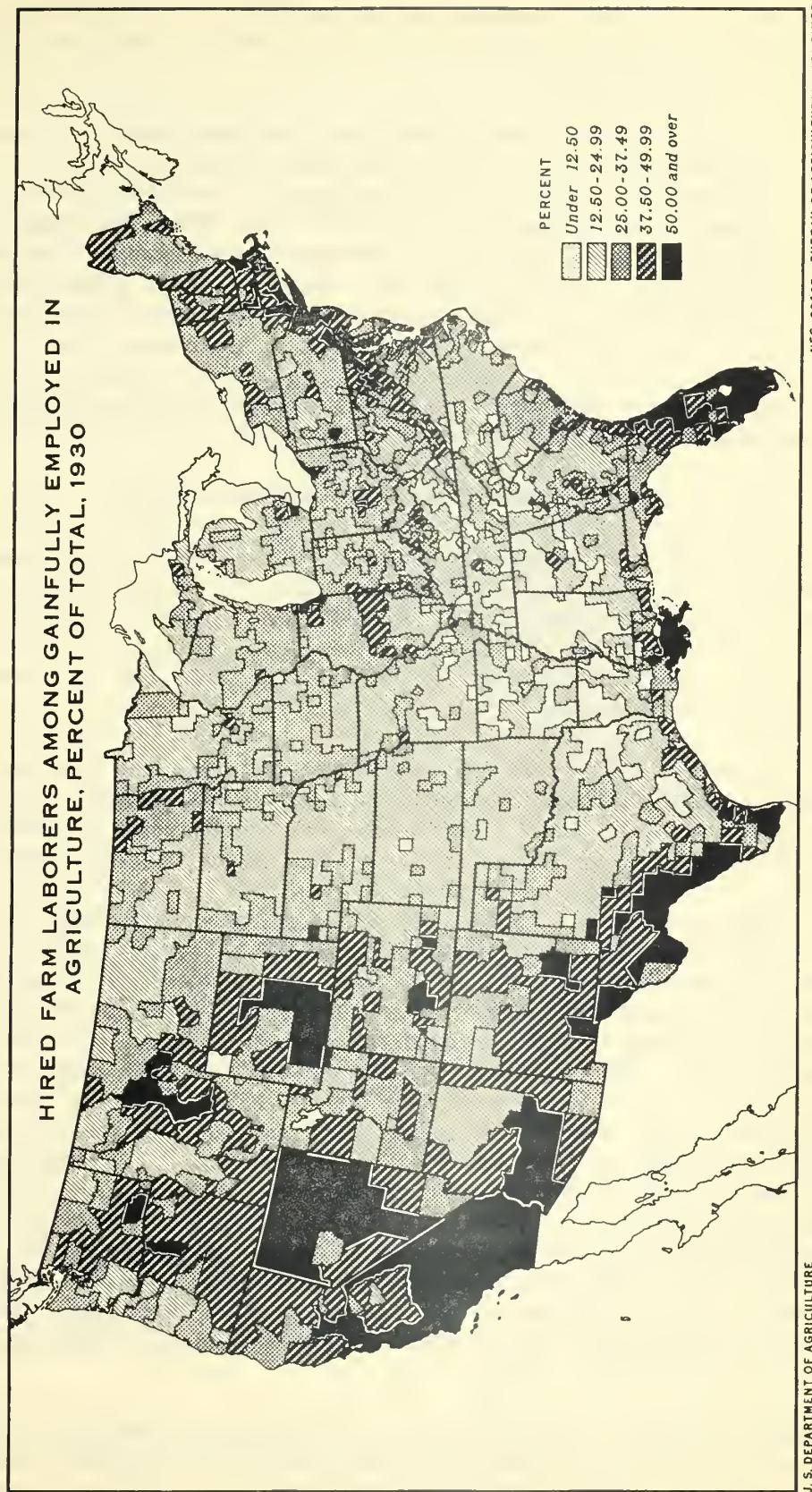
In Texas and Oklahoma alone, over 50,000 mobile cotton pickers (whites, Negroes, and Mexicans) come from as far away as 900 miles for employment during the season. In 1934, it is estimated that 20,000 workers were moving up the Eastern Seaboard, while tens of thousands of seasonal migratory laborers were working in Florida at one time. In the sugar-beet area, the peak season draws as many as 30,000 or more migratory workers every year. (The importations of labor by one great sugar company alone, between 1915 and 1936, varied from 150 to 14,500 people.) Although the number of seasonal workers has declined in the Wheat Belt since 1925 because of increasing mechanization, before that time, 250,000 men were employed in the Middle Western and Great Plains wheat harvesting season. 42/ With 200,000 to 350,000 agricultural migrants in the United States, working for limited periods in harvesting intensified crops in certain areas of the country, conditions of gang labor, inherent in the use of large numbers of workers at one time, working more or less against time and uncertain weather conditions, are bound to exist in American agriculture.

Areas of Concentration

The presence of the hired laborer in agriculture is not limited to any particular section. But areas of heavy concentration are found in California, in several States along the Atlantic Seaboard, the Mississippi Valley of Arkansas and Mississippi, and southeastern Louisiana, Texas, and Florida, as well as areas of slightly less concentration in some parts of Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, Nebraska, Kansas, the Dakotas, Minnesota, and Michigan (Fig. 10). Around many of the metropolitan centers, too, paid laborers comprise the majority of agricultural workers. When an attempt is made to locate what might be called the farm-labor areas

41/ Wendzel, Julius T., Distribution and Seasonality of Agricultural Employment, The Agricultural Situation, Vol. 22, No. 2, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, U. S. Dept. of Agr., Feb. 1, 1938.

42/ Taylor, Paul S., Migratory Farm Labor in the United States, Monthly Labor Review, March 1937.



of the Nation, the best measure to use is the ratio of hired farm laborers to all persons gainfully employed in agriculture. Figure 10 shows the location of these areas.

It will be seen from this map that the dark spots, in which 50 percent or more of the total gainfully employed in agriculture are hired farm laborers, appear primarily along the Upper Atlantic Seaboard; in Florida and the lower tip of Louisiana; along the west coast of Texas and up the Rio Grande Valley; in California, Nevada, and Arizona; and some large spots in Wyoming and western Montana. When the next gradation ($37\frac{1}{2}$ percent to 50 percent) is included, practically the whole West Coast is predominantly a farm labor area; all of Nevada, practically all of California, fully two-thirds of Arizona and Oregon, about one-half of Washington, Idaho, New Mexico, and Wyoming, and large areas in Montana, Utah, and Colorado must be added.

California and Other Western States

If we were to classify as areas of concentration all those in which 25 percent or more of the gainfully employed in agriculture are hired laborers, we would then see, from Figure 10, that practically the whole area that lies west of what are commonly known as the Prairie States, is included in one big farm-labor area which runs from the Rio Grande Valley in Texas to northwestern Montana.

Since predominance of hired farm labor is found wherever intensification of agriculture requires a large amount of manual labor, California's specialized fruit, vegetable, and truck crops, (as well as rice, hops, nuts, and cotton crops) explain this heavy concentration.

Gang labor has reached greater proportions here than in any other State. "The growth of intensive agriculture - with highly capitalized, large-scale farming methods and concentrated ownership, huge total payments to farm laborers, - has given California an industrialized agriculture, a system of open-air food factories, it might be called. Nearly 6 percent of the farms of California are operated by managers, which is six times as high as the national average. Wage relations are highly developed, and gang labor is employed, with foremen and sub-foremen. Elaborate piece rates are set up, with bonus payments. Farmers' agents recruit and distribute laborers, extremely few of whom belong to the family of the farm operator. Incipient labor organizations have arisen, and bitter strikes have been conducted. The State maintains labor commissioners who aid rural laborers to collect unpaid wages, just as they aid urban workers..... The family farm, which still expresses the national ideal, is subordinate in California to the influence of Agriculture on an industrialized pattern." 43/

43/ Taylor, Paul S., and Vasey, Tom, Contemporary Background of California Farm Labor, Rural Sociology Journal, Vol. 1, No. 4, Dec. 1936, p. 419; Beals, Carleton, Migs, America's Shantytown on Wheels, Forum, Jan. 1938, pp. 10-15.

The southwest Gulf Coast of Texas and the Rio Grande Valley use hired labor for fruit, truck, and cotton crops, and the harvesting of sugar beets draws many farm laborers into Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, Nebraska, and Kansas. Here the peak labor demand is in the harvesting season, while the thinning of the plants also requires much labor, and since it is a highly seasonal business, migratory workers play an important part. These workers are mainly of two types: those who live in nearby villages and towns and move to the fields for the whole season, and those who are permanently migratory groups, chiefly Mexicans. Work "in the beets" is carried on by contracts in which a stipulated amount is paid for harvesting a given acreage, leading to the practice of family teamwork.

In January 1935, 36 percent of all farm laborers working for wages in the Pacific States were employed on farms with 8 or more hired workers; in Arizona, this percentage reached as high as 68 percent. It is in these areas that gang labor is most pronounced and the individual hired man is least prevalent. The percentage of all hired laborers on farms with 3 or more workers ranged from 16.5 percent in the West North Central Division to 61 percent in the Pacific States, and from 10.1 percent in the State of Minnesota to 82.1 percent in Arizona. 44/

Florida and the Atlantic Seaboard

If the second gradient on Figure 10 - 37½ percent to 50 percent - is included in the areas of heavy concentration, practically the whole of Florida and considerable areas up the Atlantic coast of Georgia and South Carolina, as well as spots along the Gulf Coast of Louisiana must be added. If sharecroppers were to be counted as farm laborers, this area of concentration would cover the entire Cotton Belt. There is a solid area from northern Virginia and southern Maryland through to the northern boundaries of New Hampshire and Vermont, as well as northern Maine and parts of eastern New York and Pennsylvania. If we were to include also in the areas of concentration all counties in which 25 percent or more of all gainfully employed in agriculture are hired workers, there would be an almost solid area consisting of the New England and Middle Atlantic States.

In Florida, fruit and truck crops call for much hand labor of a highly seasonal character, while along the Atlantic Seaboard farm labor is concentrated mainly around metropolitan centers such as Philadelphia, New York, Camden, Trenton, and Boston where there is a great deal of truck farming, and where the local labor supply is insufficient for the demand. Here again there is a great deal of migratory labor following the growing seasons for 5 or 6 months, some of the remainder of the year

44/ Wendzel, Julius T., Distribution of Hired Farm Laborers in the United States, Monthly Labor Review, Vol. 45, No. 3, September 1937.

being spent in industrial employment in urban centers. Casual labor for berry picking, for example, requires only a few days or weeks and is frequently done by school children. In the southeastern part of Louisiana, on the other hand, farm labor that is used mainly for truck crops and sugar cane, is supplied mostly by the local labor supply.

The Middle West

Figure 10 shows that there are a great many farm laborers in the Corn and Spring Wheat Belts. But it is only when areas of concentration include all counties in which 25 percent or more of the gainfully employed in agriculture are hired laborers, that this area can be counted as a farm-labor concentration area. In addition to the demands for seasonal labor in harvesting corn and wheat, workers are needed in North Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Michigan for the harvesting of sugar beets, cranberries, fruit and truck crops. Although the length of employment varies with each crop, the work rarely lasts during the entire year. Consequently, many migratory workers follow the different crops in their varying seasons within the State or outside of State boundaries.

Conclusions

The reader will undoubtedly be struck by the lack of relationship between heavy farm labor areas and other areas marked by one or more disadvantaging factors here presented. Areas with a heavy concentration of farm laborers correlate with practically no other disadvantaged area of the Nation. This is due to the fact that at least 50 percent of the farm laborers of the country are seasonal workers, probably two or three hundred thousand of them being migratory laborers who move into good agricultural areas to assist with the peak loads of agriculture at harvest time. They are not operators eligible to receive rehabilitation loans or emergency grants, and therefore do not appear in the rural-relief population to any considerable extent. They are not employed by persons living on poor or submarginal lands, and with the exception of the Great Plains, they do not appear in highly migrative areas. In some instances, as in California, they appear in areas of the highest rural standard of living, although evidences show that they do not participate in these high standards. If sharecroppers were to be included among the farm laborers, for which there would be considerable justification, there would then be a high correlation between low income, low standard of living, and southern farm-labor areas.

Chapter III

FARM TENANTS

Number and Conditions of Farm Tenants

The existence of almost 3,000,000 tenant families, the members of whose households constitute approximately 13,000,000 farm people, sets a social problem of the first magnitude with which the Nation must wrestle in an intelligent and constructive way, for farm tenancy in many of its aspects is a disadvantaging condition in the lives of those who live and work in that status. The fact that the rate of tenancy has moved up from 25.6 percent in 1880 to 42.1 percent in 1935, and the fact that the number of farm tenant families has almost trebled between 1880 and 1935 clearly indicate that this condition is being aggravated rather than alleviated as time goes on.

Not every farm tenant family is living in poverty nor under economic and social conditions from which it cannot extricate itself. Thousands are tenants by choice. They prefer to invest their capital in operating equipment and handle relatively large acreages, rather than invest in land and handle relatively small acreages. 45/ More than 500,000 farm tenants in 1930 were relatives of their landlords, many of them with some expectation of at least partially inheriting the farms they operated, and thousands of others through successful farming will gradually climb the ladder to the status of ownership. These things should be kept in mind by the reader as he follows the story of some of the darker aspects of farm tenancy.

At its best, tenant status is a normal rung on the ladder from farm labor toward farm ownership; or it is a stage of apprenticeship during a period of learning successful farm management; or it is a means of accumulating the partial purchase price of a farm by a method of operation that requires a minimum outlay of capital. 46/ Under certain controlled

45/ Studies of the comparative acreage farmed by owners and tenants show that the tenant can farm from $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 times the acreage that the owner can with an equal amount of fixed capital, because the major portion of the owner's capital is tied up in land investment. See Spillman, W. J., and Goldenweiser, E. A., Yearbook, Dept. of Agr., 1916, pp. 321-346.

46/ Even a cash renter who furnishes all his own livestock and equipment and bears all expenses of operation requires only from one-fifth to one-fourth of the amount of capital that is required to own and operate a farm of the same size. See First Annual Report of the Farm Bureau-Farm Management Service, Univ. of Ill., May 1931 (M284); also Three Years' Summary Report, 1930, 1931, 1932, Univ. of Ill., Urbana, Oct. 1933; Thomas, Preston W., and Stott, C. O., Annual Farm Business Analysis of Farm Management Demonstrations Conducted in Utah 1931, Agr. Coll. Ext. Serv., Logan, Utah, April 1932; and The Farm Organization and Management of the Master Farmers of Georgia, Bull. No. 430, Univ. of Ga., Athens, Ga.

conditions such as obtain in some nations, it can be a secure and satisfactory form of tenure because it escapes, for the most part, the pronounced fluctuations in land values which in periods of depression force the mortgaged owner into bankruptcy, and even in normal times keep him struggling to meet fixed payments on land debts which in many cases are higher than prevailing rents. 47/

At its worst, tenancy forces family living standards below levels of decency; develops rural slums; and breeds poverty, illiteracy, and disease. In such circumstances, tenant families live in houses of poor construction, almost universally in need of repair, often without doors and windows, with leaky roofs, and sometimes even without floors. Seldom are these houses equipped with running water, electricity, bathrooms, or indoor toilets. The surroundings are usually unsightly and devoid of beauty. The poorer tenant family's food is simple, lacks in variety, and often lacks some of the essentials of good nutrition. Their clothing, in a great many cases, is inadequate for the mere protection of the body, much less to provide any sense of satisfaction. 48/ The incessant movement from farm to farm and from community to community of families living under such conditions constitutes a disintegrating influence upon all social institutions and all forms and types of social participation. Systematic church attendance is impossible, neighborhood relations are constantly disrupted, and the children of tenant parents find their school attendance periodically interrupted. 49/

More discouraging still is the gradual development of an inferior status that comes to any segment of a population living for a few generations under persistent economic and social handicaps. Once tenancy as a mark of social status has fastened itself on a large percentage

47/ Schickele, Rainer, Tenure Problems and Research Needs in the Middle West, Jour. Farm. Econ., Vol. XIX, No. 1, Feb. 1937; also Harris, Marshall, Agricultural Landlord-Tenant Relations in England and Wales, Land Use Planning Publ. No. 4, Resettlement Administration, Washington, D. C., 1936.

48/ Dickins, Dorothy, A Study of Food Habits of People in Two Contrasting Areas of Mississippi, Bull. No. 245, Miss. Agr. Exp. Sta., Nov. 1927; Kirkpatrick, E. L., Average Qualities and Costs of Clothing Purchased by Farm Families, Mimeo. Rpt., U. S. Dept. of Agr., 1925; Duncan, O. D. and Sanders, J. T., A Study of Certain Economic Factors in Relation to Social Life Among Oklahoma Cotton Farmers, Exp. Sta. Bull. No. 211, Okla. Agr. Exp. Sta., Stillwater, Okla., April 1933; Woofter, T. J. et al., Landlord and Tenant on the Cotton Plantation, Res. Mono. V, Works Progress Administration, Washington, D. C., 1936, Chap. VII; Allred, C. E. et al., Farm Tenancy in Tennessee, Rpt. No. 17, Univ. of Tenn., Knoxville, Tenn., July 15, 1936.

49/ Vance, Rupert B., Farmers Without Land, Public Affairs Pamphlet No. 12, Public Affairs Committee, New York, N. Y., 1937.

of the farm population in a specific area, it carries with it all the institutional and cultural disadvantages of communities that have in their midst a recognized inferior group. Sooner or later it also results in either a loss of desire on the part of disadvantaged persons to attain social well-being, or in a tendency to escape from perpetual handicaps by organized, direct, and sometimes violent action. 50/ No matter what the psychological reactions or attitudes of the tenant groups within such communities may be, it is a patent fact that the whole institutional, social, and cultural life of these communities is lowered. Thus the depressing influence affects every member of the community.

Other less tangible effects of tenant and sharecropper status are persistent and disadvantaging. Those who know their lives intimately feel strongly that a sense of fear pervades their thoughts and actions, engendered unquestionably by their uncertainty and insecurity, their utter lack of opportunity to depend on any definite source of income even in their immediate future. It is probably this sense of fear and uncertainty that leads them to grasp rather desperately at will-o'-the-wisp, get-rich quick, money-making schemes - enterprises about which they know little and for which they are almost totally unfitted. Their hope for improved income and living conditions, which often is the impelling force behind their ceaseless moving, causes them to shift from one landowner to another. The frequent intermingling of former renters and owners or sons of owners, lowered to cropper status, on the same land with so-called "poor white trash," and colored families breeds serious ill feeling. Contact with landowners who are sometimes hard taskmasters nurtures a potential sense of distrust and may fan it into open hostility and sometimes violence. Those who have dropped back to cropper status, and conversely those who have risen above it, are frankly resented and misunderstood if they attempt to gain the confidence and cooperation of croppers who need their assistance. The unfortunate plight of the croppers inherently leads to misunderstanding, unhappiness, and discontent.

In the earlier period of our national history, the rise to farm ownership was relatively easy, and was consequently rapid. Young farmers remained tenants only a comparatively few years and few failed ultimately to become owners. Today, thousands find the ascent so difficult, that more of them each generation get stalled, and remain tenants the rest of their lives. They pass down to their sons and daughters no land inheritance

50/ Kester, Howard, Revolt Among the Share-Croppers, Covici Friede, New York, N. Y., 1936; Eddy, Sherwood, A Door of Opportunity, Eddy & Page, New York, 1937, pp. 19-27; Johnson, C. S., Shadow of the Plantation, Univ. of Chicago Press, Chicago, Ill., July 1934, 215 pp.; Amberson, Wm. R., The New Deal for Sharecroppers, in the Nation, Feb. 13, 1935, pp. 185-187.

and no land-ownership status. What was once a rapidly moving stream of farmers making steady progress to ownership has become, in some sections of the Nation, a sluggish stream or pool of congenital tenants. Apparently more and more, in the future, some men will be tenants simply because they are sons of tenants. 51/

In most cases, by the time this social inheritance has moved into the third generation, as it already has in many instances, the status of the tenant family will be fixed. Under such circumstances, farm tenants can scarcely be criticised for spending even hard-earned money for automobiles for the family and decent clothes for marriageable daughters in an attempt to maintain or gain social status. In a number of studies of farm family standards of living, this practice on the part of farm tenants has been revealed. 52/ The desire for social status thus competes with the objective of gaining farm ownership in a very understandable way.

At each succeeding decade for which census data are available, a greater percentage of all age groups among farmers has appeared as tenants. If this were true only for the younger men, it would not be so disturbing, for it would probably indicate only that as we move away from the pioneering era, it takes longer to gain farm ownership. But when such ownership has not been gained after 25 years of tenant operation, it is probably evident that a great many such farmers will never be owners. Between 1910 and 1930, the proportion of all farmers 45 years of age and over in the North Central States who were tenants increased from 27 to 30 percent. In the Western States, where tenancy has more recently appeared, these trends are not yet apparent. But in the South, where it has been very prevalent for at least 75 years, 35 percent of those who had passed 45 years of age were tenants in 1930. In simple terms, these data reveal the fact that wherever tenancy has developed to any marked extent and prevailed for any length of time, a greater percentage of farmers grow to old age without attaining ownership status.

In 1930, approximately 374,000 tenant farmers were 55 years of age and over; 90,000 more were in this older age group in 1930 than in

51/ Taylor, Carl C. and Zimmerman, C. C., Economic and Social Conditions of North Carolina Farmers, N. C. State College of Agr., Univ. of N. C., State Dept. of Agr. U. S. Bur. of Agr. Econ.; Hamilton, C. Horace, Recent Changes in the Social and Economic Status of Farm Families in North Carolina, Bull. No. 309, Agr. Exp. Sta., N. C. State College of Agr., Raleigh, N. C., May 1937, 180 pp.

52/ Anderson, W. A., Farm Family Living Among White Owner and Tenant Operators in Wake County, 1926, Bull. No. 269, Agr. Exp. Sta., Raleigh, N. C., Sept. 1929; Kirkpatrick, E. L., Average Qualities and Costs of Clothing Purchased by Farm Families, (Mimeographed.) U. S. Dept. of Agr., 1925.

1910 - about 65,000 in the South, and 25,000 in the North and West. Each decade since 1910, the percentage of all tenants 55 years of age and over has increased. In 1910, 12.1 percent of them were in this age classification; in 1920, 12.5 percent; and in 1930, 14.5 percent (Table 2).

Table 2.- Percentage distribution of farm tenants
by age groups, 1890-1930

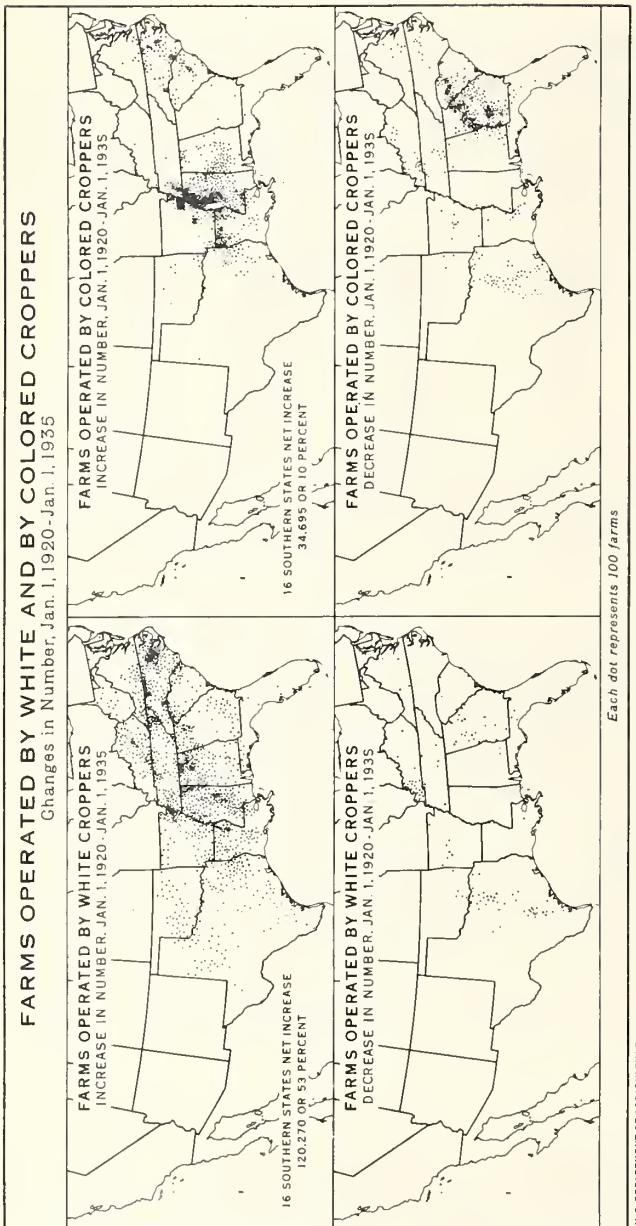
Age group (years)	:	1890	:	1900	:	1910	:	1920	:	1930
Under 25		9.1		9.9		13.5		12.0		12.5
25 - 34		33.4		32.6		33.1		31.1		27.3
35 - 44		26.2		25.0		24.9		26.1		26.1
45 - 54		17.6		18.9		16.4		18.4		19.6
55 and over		13.7		13.5		12.1		12.5		14.5
55 - 64		-		9.0		8.5		8.5		10.2
65 and over		-		4.5		3.6		4.0		4.3

Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, Agriculture, Vol. 4, Table 4, p. 315.

Furthermore, there is considerable evidence that the agricultural ladder is working in reverse in some areas. Tenants are drifting down the ladder into the status of cropper and even farm laborer, as well as climbing to that of part-owner; and there is evidence that more croppers are becoming hired men than are attaining higher tenure status.

The rate of tenancy for the Nation decreased slightly between 1930 and 1935 and decreased considerably in some of the heavily tenanted areas. In these areas there was apparently the greatest shift from cropper to hired-man status, while in some other areas, the cropper type of tenancy appeared for the first time or increased where it had not previously been prevalent. 53/ (Fig. 11). Raper shows, as a result of a

53/ Journal of Farm Economics, Vol. XIX, No. 1 - Discussion by T. Lynn Smith of Tenure Problems and Research Needs in the South, by C. H. Wiley, Feb. 1937, pp. 143-147; Brannen, C. O., Relation of Land Tenure to Plantation Organization with Developments Since 1920, Univ. of Ark., Fayetteville, Ark., 1928, 85 pp.; Blalock, H. W., Plantation Operations of Landlords and Tenants in Arkansas, Bull. No. 339, Agr. Exp. Sta., Univ. of Ark, Fayetteville, Ark., May 1937, 45 pp.; Hamilton, C. Horace, Recent Changes in the Social and Economic Status of Farm Families in North Carolina, Bull. No. 309, Agr. Exp. Sta. N. C. State College of Agr., Raleigh, N. C., May 1937, 180 pp.



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FIG. 11. To a disproportionate extent increases in number of croppers in the South between 1920 and 1935 were increases in white croppers. Aside from counties in which there never were many croppers, because of the nature of the agriculture, and aside from counties where there was heavy abandonment of land for farming, such as occurred in western Kentucky and central Georgia, increases in number of white croppers were widely distributed over the South - much more so than the increase of colored croppers. White croppers increased in number even in many of the counties wherein most farmers, particularly those of cropper status, were colored. Colored croppers increased also in most of these counties, but generally in the Piedmont of Georgia and South Carolina colored croppers decreased. White croppers also decreased in the Central Piedmont, but much less than the colored croppers, and in the Upper Piedmont white croppers increased in number.

detailed study of two counties in Georgia, that the percentage of owners increased slightly, the percentage of renters remained the same, and the percentage of croppers decreased, but the percentage of laborers increased greatly between 1927 and 1934. 54/

A deduction from the best available data indicates that croppers in great numbers have fallen into the status of farm laborers during the depression. The number of croppers decreased between 1930 and 1935 in each of the five States of Texas, Georgia, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and South Carolina. Some rose to the status of cash tenants because governmental loan contracts required it, but many others were reduced to wage hands or unemployment. In these five States, the reduction in the number of croppers in the 5 years was approximately as follows: Texas, 28,600; Georgia, 20,400; Arkansas, 9,400; Oklahoma, 7,400; and South Carolina, 2,700; - a total for the five States of 68,500. The evidence is that landlords, especially plantation owners, during the depression shifted their tenants from sharecropper to hired-laborer status.

Displaced tenants divided themselves into various groups; many became wage hands, many went to towns and cities, many were forced onto farm relief rolls, and many of them became migratory farm laborers. 55/ The number of croppers in the United States showed a net decrease of approximately 60,000 between 1930 and 1935, many of them undoubtedly remaining on the same farms and plantations as hired men. 56/

The fact is, the so-called agricultural ladder has never operated to any considerable extent in favor of croppers. They are not tenants in the sense of being renter-operators, but are rather hired men who receive a part of the crop they produce in lieu of wages. This makes it almost inevitable that they be shifted to a straight wage status whenever such an arrangement is to the interest of landlords, and that they be displaced in considerable numbers as mechanization of agricultural production advances. Furthermore, as Charles S. Johnson says, "The very qualities which might normally lead a tenant to obtain a position of

54/ Raper, Arthur F., Preface to Peasantry, Chap. III, Univ. of N. C. Press, Chapel Hill, N. C., 1936.

55/ Blackwell, Gordon, The Displaced Tenant Farm Family in North Carolina, Social Forces, Vol. 13, No. 1, Oct. 1934, pp. 65-73.

56/ Frey, Fred C. and Smith, T. L., The Influence of the AAA Cotton Program Upon the Tenant, Cropper, and Laborer, Rural Sociology Journal, Vol. I, No. 4, December 1936, pp. 483-505; Black, J. D., and Allen, R. H., The Growth of Farm Tenancy in the United States, Quarterly Journal of Econ., Vol. LI, May 1937; Hoover, Calvin B., Human Problems in Acreage Reduction in the South, Report for AAA, Washington, D. C. (1934).

renter, and eventually of owner, are just the ones that make him a permanent asset as a cropper." 57/

There are two additional facts or trends which, as long as they exist, will tend to increase the proportion of farm population who are and will be tenants. One is the fact that farm tenant families tend to be larger than those of owners, and the other is the fact that farm owners' children tend to enter non-farming occupations and professions in greater numbers than do farm tenants' children. To every 100 farm owners' wives living in 1910, there had been born only 247 children by that time, compared with 271 for tenants' wives, and 333 for farm laborers' wives. 58/ Duncan and Sanders in a study of 275 owner and 306 tenant families in Oklahoma in which the parents had been married for 20 years or more, found that the average number of births per 100 owner families was 538.9, and per 100 tenant families it was 586.3. Furthermore, they discovered that of the children of farm parents who had left their homes, only 54.6 percent of the children of full owners had entered the occupation of farming, whereas the percentage of croppers' children entering agriculture was 59.2 and the percentage of share and cash tenants' children was 63.3. 59/ Miss Dickins found in Mississippi that among the 912 cotton farmers' sons and daughters included in her study, who had left school, only 59.4 percent of owners' sons and 55.7 percent of owners' daughters had entered farming as a full-time occupation, whereas 76.3 percent of tenants' sons and 79.2 percent of tenants' daughters had no occupation other than farming. 60/

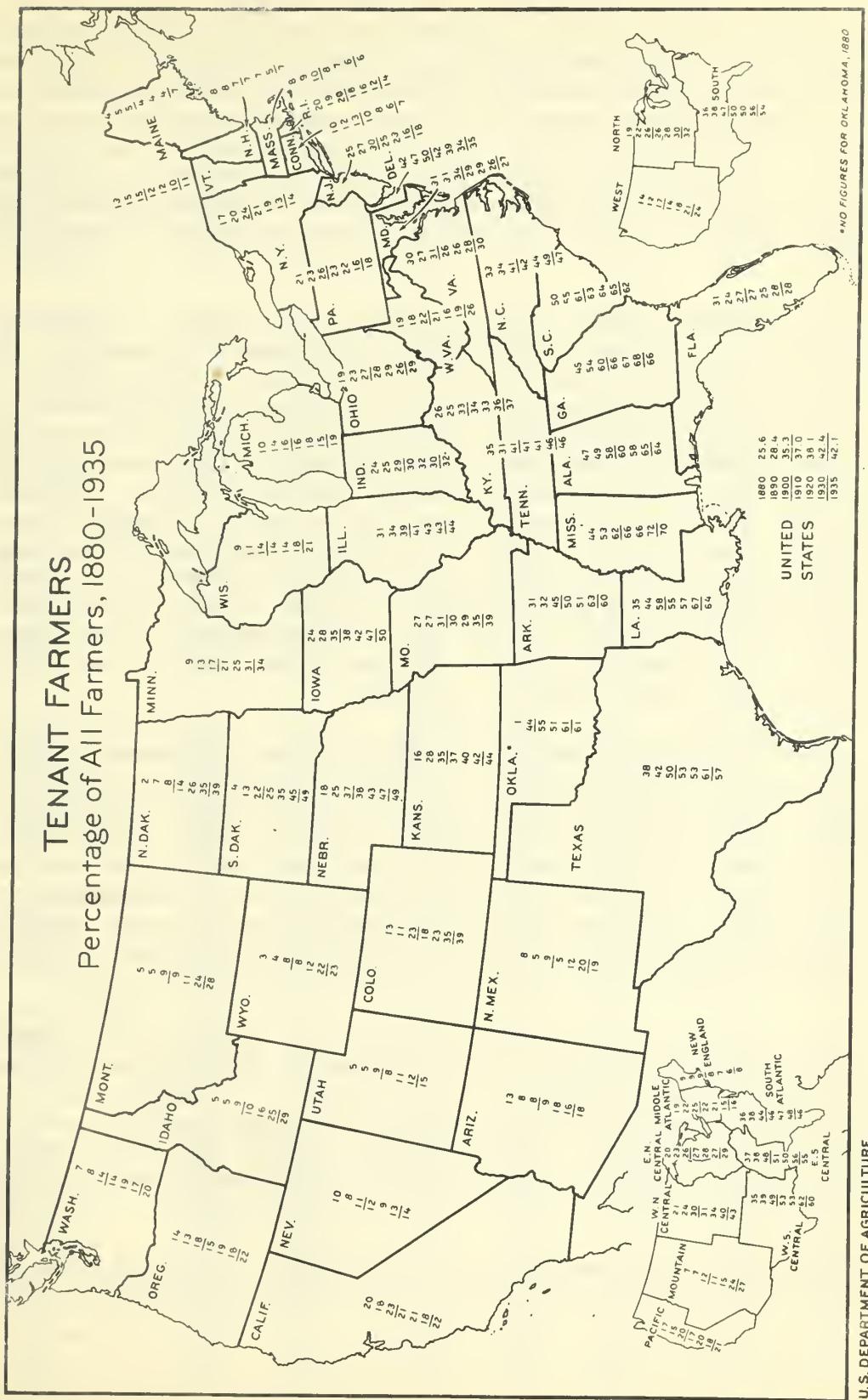
The increase in farm tenancy, in both numbers and percentage of all farmers, was steady from 1880 to 1930, although at varying rates from decade to decade. The numbers added each decade for this 50-year period were as follows: from 1880 to 1890, 270,392; 1890 to 1900, 730,051; 1900 to 1910, 329,712; 1910 to 1920, 100,128; and 1920 to 1930, 209,561. Between 1930 and 1935, another 200,790 were added, making the

57/ Johnson, C. S., Alexander, W. W., and Embree, E. R., *The Collapse of Cotton Tenancy*, Univ. of N. C. Press, Chapel Hill, N. C., 1935, 81 pp.; Wakefield, Olaf, *Recent Trends in Farm Tenancy in North Carolina*, Unpublished Master's Thesis, N. C. State College of Agr., Raleigh, N. C., 1937; Brannen, C. O., op. cit.; Hamilton, C. Horace, op. cit.

58/ Kiser, Clyde V., *Trends in the Fertility of Social Classes from 1900 to 1910*, Reprint from *Human Biology* Vol. 5, No. 2, May 1933, pp. 256-273.

59/ Duncan, O. D. and Sanders, J. T., op. cit.

60/ Dickins, Dorothy, *Occupations of Sons and Daughters of Mississippi Cotton Farmers*, Bull. No. 318, Miss. Agr. Exp. Sta., State College, Miss.. May 1937.



number of tenant families 2.8 times as many in 1935 as in 1880. The percentage increase for the period 1880-1935 was from 25.6 percent to 42.1 percent (Fig. 12). Increases in numbers of tenants took place in all except four States (Arkansas, Georgia, Mississippi, and Texas) between 1930 and 1935. Increases in the proportion of farms operated by tenants occurred in 36 States. "Considering the 32 States located outside of the South as a group, the proportion of tenancy rose from 28.5 percent in 1930 to 30.6 percent in 1935. Increases took place even in the New England and Middle Atlantic States, where tenancy had been declining for three decades." 61/

More pronounced than the varying rates of increase from decade to decade has been the regional difference in the growth of tenancy. In 1935 there were still 19 States in which the percent of tenant farms was smaller than the 1880 national rate of 25.6 percent. In a number of States, the rate decreased during one or more decades in the last 55 years, and in a few States there has been not only a decline in percentage, but a decrease in absolute numbers of farmers who are tenants. The New England States, for instance, had a lower rate in 1935 (7.7 percent), and a considerably lower rate in 1930 (6.3 percent) than they had in 1880 (8.5 percent). In fact there were approximately 35,000 fewer tenant farmers in the New England and Middle Atlantic States in 1935 than in 1880. There have been periods in which the rate has decreased in other States also, but the trend downward has not been sustained, and in every such instance there was a later period of increase.

In the New England States, for example, the rate decreased from 9.4 percent in 1900 to 5.6 percent in 1925, but had risen to 7.7 percent in 1935. In the Middle Atlantic States the rate declined steadily from 1900 to 1930, but increased between 1930 and 1935. In the South Atlantic there was a decline between 1920 and 1925, but an increase between 1925 and 1930. A study of Table 3 reveals similar fluctuations in individual States. But there was not a single State in which the rate was not higher in 1935 than it had been reported in one or more previous census periods at some time during the last 55 years (Table 3).

It is worth noting that the decrease in the national tenancy rate from 42.4 percent in 1930 to 42.1 percent in 1935 did not in fact represent an absolute decrease in farm tenancy. It meant only that of the 550,000 increase in farms during this 5-year period, more of them were owner-operated than tenant-operated in 1935. The vast majority of these new farms appeared in the so-called "self-sufficient" farming

61/ Putney, Bryant, Government Aid to Farm Tenants, Editorial Research Reports, Vol. II, No. 21, Washington, D. C., Dec. 12, 1936, p. 417.

TABLE 3. PERCENTAGES OF FARM TENANCY, 1880-1935

Division and State	Tenancy rate									
	1935	1930	1925	1920	1910	1900	1890	1880		
U. S. Total	42.1	42.4	38.6	38.1	37.0	35.3	28.4	25.6		
New England	7.7	6.3	5.6	7.4	8.0	9.4	9.3	8.5		
Maine	6.9	4.5	3.4	4.2	4.3	4.7	5.4	4.3		
New Hampshire	7.3	5.3	4.8	6.7	6.9	7.5	8.0	8.1		
Vermont	10.9	9.7	9.3	11.6	12.3	14.6	14.6	13.4		
Massachusetts	6.2	5.6	4.8	7.1	8.1	9.6	9.3	8.2		
Rhode Island	13.8	12.5	12.1	15.5	18.0	20.2	18.7	19.9		
Connecticut	7.3	6.2	6.4	8.5	9.8	12.9	11.5	10.2		
Middle Atlantic	16.2	14.7	15.8	20.7	22.3	25.3	22.1	19.2		
New York	14.2	13.2	14.1	19.2	20.8	23.9	20.2	16.5		
New Jersey	17.8	15.6	15.9	23.0	24.8	29.9	27.2	24.6		
Pennsylvania	17.7	15.9	17.4	21.9	23.3	26.0	23.3	21.2		
East North Central	29.4	27.3	26.0	28.1	27.0	26.3	22.8	20.5		
Ohio	28.9	28.3	25.5	29.5	28.4	27.4	22.9	19.3		
Indiana	31.6	30.1	29.2	32.0	30.0	28.6	25.4	23.7		
Illinois	44.5	43.1	42.0	42.7	41.4	39.3	34.0	31.4		
Michigan	19.0	15.5	15.1	17.7	15.8	15.8	14.0	10.0		
Wisconsin	20.7	18.2	15.5	14.4	13.9	13.5	11.4	9.1		
West North Central	42.6	39.9	37.8	34.2	30.9	29.6	24.0	20.5		
Minnesota	33.7	31.1	27.1	24.7	21.0	17.3	12.9	9.1		
Iowa	49.6	47.3	44.7	41.7	37.8	34.9	28.1	23.8		
Missouri	38.8	34.8	32.6	28.8	29.9	30.5	26.8	27.3		
North Dakota	39.1	35.1	34.4	25.6	14.3	8.5	6.9	2.1		
South Dakota	48.6	44.6	41.5	34.9	24.8	21.8	13.2	4.4		
Nebraska	49.3	47.1	46.4	42.9	38.1	36.9	24.7	18.0		
Kansas	44.0	42.4	42.2	40.4	36.8	35.2	28.2	16.3		
South Atlantic	46.3	48.1	44.5	46.8	45.9	44.2	38.5	36.1		
Delaware	34.8	33.8	35.8	39.3	41.9	50.3	46.9	42.4		
Maryland	27.2	26.5	26.4	28.9	29.5	33.6	31.0	30.9		
Virginia	29.5	28.1	25.2	25.6	26.5	30.7	26.9	29.5		
West Virginia	25.8	18.6	16.3	16.2	20.5	21.8	17.7	19.1		
North Carolina	47.2	49.2	42.2	43.5	42.3	41.4	34.1	33.5		
South Carolina	62.2	65.1	65.1	64.5	63.0	61.1	55.3	50.3		
Georgia	65.6	68.2	63.8	66.6	65.6	59.9	53.5	44.9		
Florida	28.0	28.4	21.3	25.3	26.7	26.5	23.6	30.9		
East South Central	54.8	55.9	50.3	49.7	50.7	48.1	38.3	36.8		
Kentucky	37.1	35.9	32.0	33.4	33.9	32.8	25.0	26.5		
Tennessee	46.2	46.2	41.0	41.1	41.1	40.6	30.8	34.5		
Alabama	64.5	64.7	60.7	57.9	60.2	57.7	48.6	46.8		
Mississippi	69.8	72.2	68.3	66.1	66.1	62.4	52.8	43.8		
West South Central	59.5	62.3	59.2	52.9	52.8	49.1	38.6	35.2		
Arkansas	60.0	63.0	56.7	51.3	50.0	45.4	32.1	30.9		
Louisiana	63.7	66.6	60.1	57.1	55.3	58.0	44.4	35.2		
Oklahoma	61.2	61.5	58.6	51.0	54.8	43.8	0.7	-		
Texas	57.1	60.9	60.4	53.3	52.6	49.7	41.9	37.6		
Mountain	26.6	24.4	22.2	15.4	10.7	12.2	7.1	7.4		
Montana	27.7	24.5	21.9	11.3	8.9	9.2	4.8	5.3		
Idaho	28.5	25.3	24.4	15.9	10.3	8.8	4.6	4.7		
Wyoming	23.3	22.0	17.9	12.5	8.2	7.6	4.2	2.8		
Colorado	39.0	34.5	30.9	23.0	18.2	22.6	11.2	13.0		
New Mexico	19.0	20.2	17.1	12.2	5.5	9.4	4.5	8.1		
Arizona	17.8	16.4	21.5	18.1	9.3	8.4	7.9	13.2		
Utah	14.9	12.2	11.1	10.9	7.9	8.8	5.2	4.6		
Nevada	14.4	12.9	7.9	9.4	12.4	11.4	7.5	9.7		
Pacific	21.2	17.7	15.6	20.1	17.2	19.7	14.7	16.8		
Washington	20.0	17.0	16.3	18.7	13.7	14.4	8.5	7.2		
Oregon	21.7	17.8	16.8	18.8	15.1	17.8	12.6	14.1		
California	21.7	18.0	18.0	21.4	20.6	23.1	17.8	19.8		

areas where there were relatively few tenants. A part of the decrease in rate can undoubtedly be accounted for by sharecroppers who lost their census classifications as "tenants" and appeared in the records as "laborers." 62/

It is not the purpose of this chapter to present an historic picture of farm tenancy in the United States, but rather to discuss tenancy as a disadvantaging factor in rural life. Our attention for this purpose must therefore be turned to those areas in which the tenancy rate is abnormally high.

Areas of Concentration

Figure 13 portrays graphically the geographic spread of the heavily tenanted areas of the Nation from 1880 through 1935. It shows clearly that there are two such areas, a very large one in the Cotton Belt, and a somewhat smaller and more scattered one centering in the Corn Belt. In the Nation as a whole, but concentrated almost entirely in these two areas, there were 890 counties in 1935, in which more than 50 percent of all farmers were tenants, and 1,573 counties in which more than 37.5 percent were tenants. 63/

If the number of sharecroppers is eliminated from the tenant statistics for the Cotton Belt, and copper-operated farms are counted as owner-operated (that is, operated by those who supervise the croppers) then tenancy is higher in the northern than in the southern tenant belt. The comparative figures are 56 percent for the North and 39 percent for the South. 64/ Figure 14 shows the location and extent of the most heavily tenanted areas of the Nation in 1930.

The Cotton Belt

The growth of tenancy in the two areas has been at varying rates, decade to decade. In the southern belt, the rate was already high as early as 1890, whereas in the middle-western belt it did not develop in a pronounced way until 30 years later. The two have had one common causal factor - cash-crop farming. In the South, there is a definite relationship between tenancy and cotton farming. The highest rates for the Nation are in the States of Mississippi, Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana, South Carolina, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Texas; and the highest rates within these and other Southern States are chiefly in those counties where cotton production predominates. 65/ On the other hand, in most of Florida,

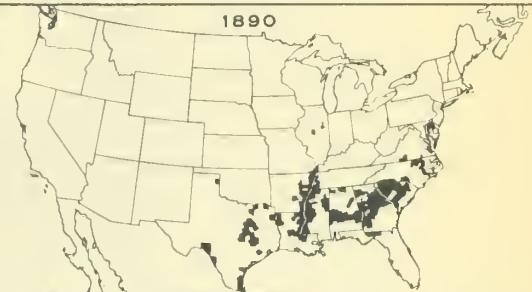
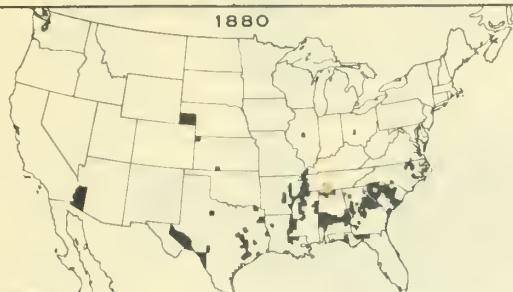
62/ Journal of Farm Economics, Vol. XIX, No. 1, Loc. Cit.

63/ Census of Agriculture, 1935.

64/ Farm Tenancy in the United States, Bulletin, Chamber of Commerce of the United States, Washington, D. C., April 1937.

65/ Hamilton, C. Horace, op. cit.; Brannen, C. O., op. cit.

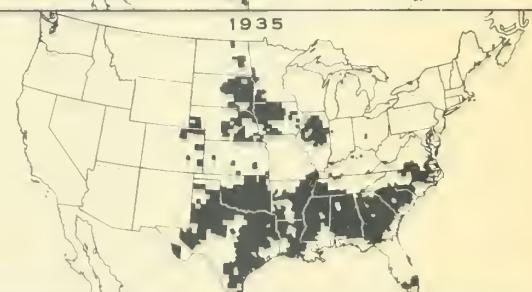
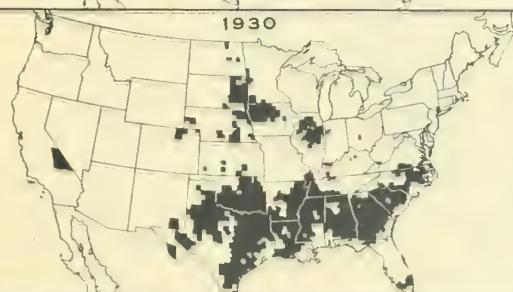
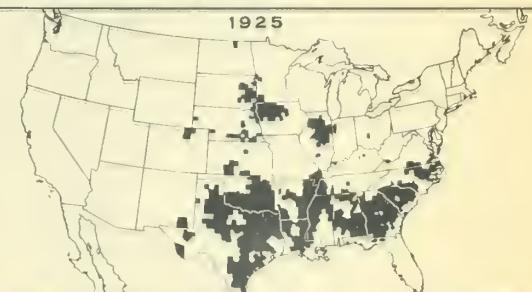
COUNTIES IN WHICH AT LEAST HALF OF THE FARMS WERE OPERATED BY
TENANTS AND CROPPERS, 1880, 1890, 1900, AND 1910



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COUNTIES IN WHICH AT LEAST HALF OF THE FARMS WERE OPERATED BY
TENANTS AND CROPPERS, 1920, 1925, 1930, AND 1935



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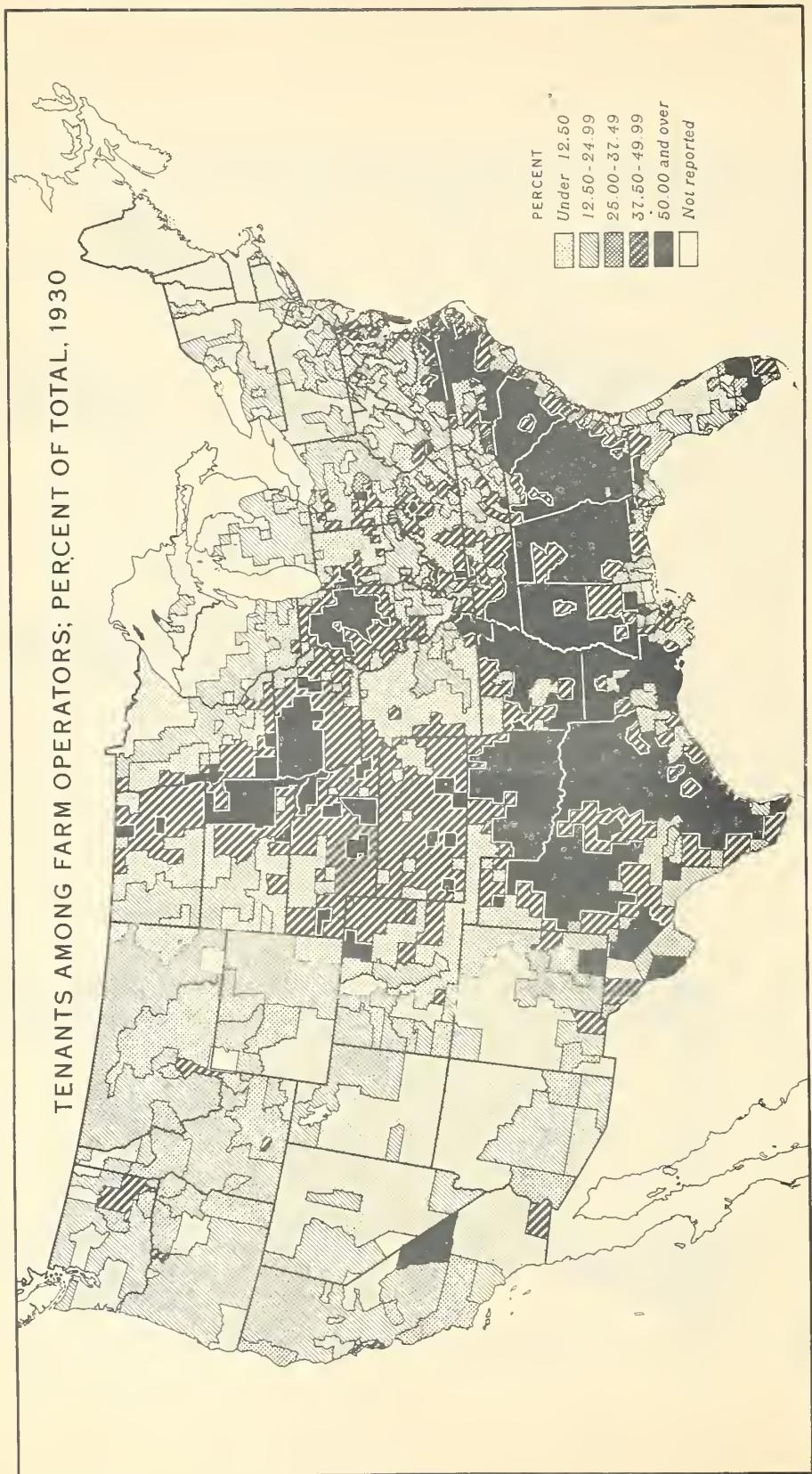
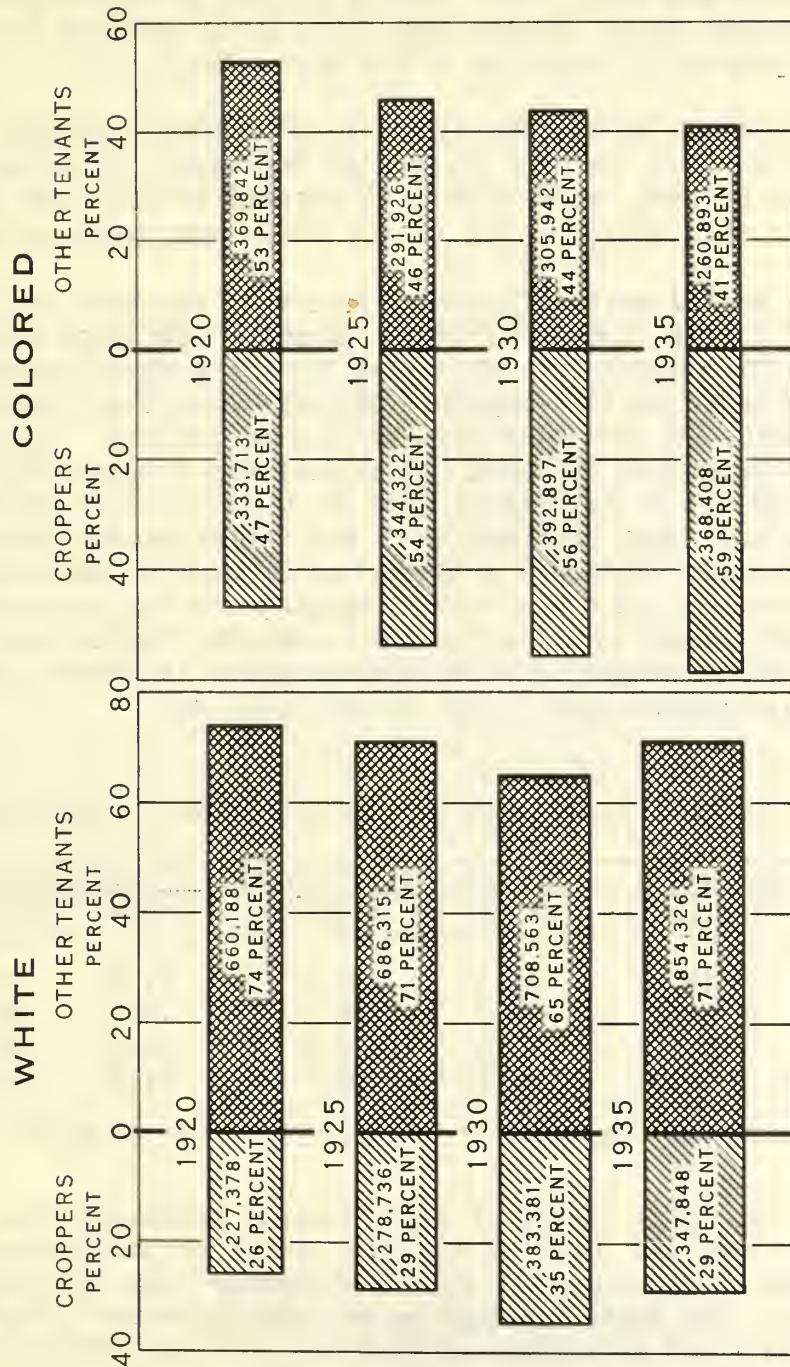


FIG. 14

NUMBER OF TENANT FARMERS AND PERCENTAGE OPERATING
AS CROPPERS, 16 SOUTHERN STATES, 1920-35



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FIG. 15. WHITE TENANTS AND CROPPERS IN THE SOUTH BETWEEN 1920 AND 1935 INCREASED 35 PERCENT, WHEREAS COLORED TENANTS AND CROPPERS DECREASED 11 PERCENT. WHITE TENANTS AND CROPPERS NOW OUTNUMBER THE COLORED ALMOST TWO TO ONE. MOREOVER, THE REMAINING COLORED TENANTS AND CROPPERS HAVE BEEN LESS SUCCESSFUL THAN THE WHITES IN RESISTING THE TREND TOWARD THE LOWER STATUS OF CROPPER. ALTHOUGH THERE WERE ABOUT 74,000 FEWER COLORED TENANTS AND CROPPERS IN 1935 THAN IN 1920, 35,000 MORE WORKED AS CROPPERS IN 1935. ABOUT 59 PERCENT OF ALL COLORED TENANTS AND CROPPERS WERE CROPPERS IN 1935 AS COMPARED WITH 56 PERCENT IN 1930, 54 PERCENT IN 1925, AND 47 PERCENT IN 1920. THE WIDTH OF THE BARS IN THE GRAPH ABOVE VARIES WITH THE NUMBER OF FARMERS.

the Piedmont and mountain sections of Virginia, North Carolina, and Tennessee, the mountain sections of Arkansas, and for the most part, the wheat areas of Oklahoma and Texas, less than 50 percent of the operators are tenants. Furthermore, high tenancy rates have moved westward across the South with the geographic expansion of the Cotton Belt.

Additional evidence of the relationship of southern tenancy to cotton is found in the fact that 73 percent of the farms producing it were tenant-operated in 1930, whereas only 56 percent of all farms and 38 percent of other than cotton farms in the South were tenanted. 66/

Probably the second most influential factor in southern tenancy is the presence of a great number of Negro farmers. Southern sharecropping is in a way the substitution of tenancy for the economic arrangements that prevailed under the slave system. The rate among Negro farmers in 1935 was 77 percent, and for white farmers only 46 percent. Then in 1935 among the Negro tenants of the South, 59 percent were croppers whereas only 29 percent of all white tenants were in that status. But the reader should be warned that "sharecropper" and "Negro cotton farmer" are not synonymous terms. Although a larger percentage of Negro than white farmers are non-owners and a considerably larger percentage are sharecroppers, the absolute number of white tenants is greater than the number of Negro tenants, and the number of white sharecroppers is almost equal to the number of Negro sharecroppers (Fig. 15 and Table 4).

Table 4.- Negro and white tenure groups in the Cotton Belt (10 States)

Year	Owner Operators		Cash and other tenants		Croppers	
	White	Negro	White	Negro	White	Negro
1920	55.9	20.2	32.3	41.3	11.8	38.5
1925	52.1	19.3	33.7	36.5	14.2	44.2
1930	47.6	17.7	33.4	35.6	19.0	46.7
1935	48.7	19.3	36.1	32.7	15.2	48.0

Furthermore, the total number of Negro tenants decreased greatly - 66,294 - between 1920 and 1935 in the nine chief cotton-producing States, and the number of white tenants increased greatly - 244,021 - during this same period. The Negro has lost as an owner operator - 24,766 between 1920 and 1935 - and as a share or cash renter - 102,042, during

66/ Turner, H. A., Graphic Summary of Farm Tenure, Misc. Publ. No. 261, U. S. Dept. of Agr., Dec. 1936, p. 2.

this period - and has increased as a cropper - 35,748 for the period. Table 4 presents the data on Negro tenure status for 1920 to 1935 in comparison with that for white farmers in 10 cotton-producing States. It shows that both races have lost numbers in the owner group and both have gained in the cropper group, but that the Negroes have lost while the whites have gained in the "other tenant" group. Thus the whites are falling from ownership to tenant and cropper status and the Negroes are falling from both ownership and renting into cropper status. In percentages the facts are as shown in Table 4.

The Corn Belt

The northern belt is considerably more scattered than the southern, the counties with 50 percent or more of all operators who are tenants being concentrated largely in an area which includes northwest Iowa, a small corner of southwest Minnesota, a small section of northeast Nebraska, and a goodly portion of eastern South Dakota. Included in this general area is a fairly large section of north central Illinois, and, in slightly less density, the eastern portion of the Winter Wheat Belt, where cash crop farming is apparently a predominant factor. 67/

Tenancy in this northern region has a considerably different history than it has in the South. Here originally, most of the land was operated in family-sized farms by owners, and the drift into tenancy has taken place largely during the last 35 years. For instance, Iowa, which in 1935 had almost one-half of its farms tenant-operated and more than 50 percent of its land so operated, in 1900 had had only 34.9 percent tenant farmers and only 33.6 percent of its land under tenant operation. The latest available data indicate that in no county in the State is less than 35 percent of all farm land tenant-operated, and there are eight counties in which 70 percent or more is in this category. 68/

For a number of decades, tenancy in the Corn Belt increased most rapidly in high-land-value areas, where it took larger down-payments to purchase farms and where prosperous agriculture made possible the retirement of owner-operators in great numbers. 69/ Furthermore, all over this belt, in both good and poor land areas, ownership on the part of

67/ Stewart, C. L. and Ackerman, Joseph, Farm Land Rented in Illinois Townships, Illinois Farm Economics, Nos. 26 and 27, Univ. of Ill., Urbana, Ill., July and Aug. 1937, pp. 125-127.

68/ Schickele, Rainer and Norman, Chas. A., Farm Tenure in Iowa, Bull. No. 354, Agr. Exp. Sta., Ames, Ia., Jan. 1937. Fig. 7, p. 169.

69/ Ackerman, Joseph and Stewart, C. L., Land Tenure in Illinois, Illinois Farm Economics, No. 11, Univ. of Ill., Urbana, Ill., April 1936, pp. 52-54.

many farmers has been accomplished and maintained by heavy mortgage indebtedness. Between 1930 and 1935, these debts became too heavy to carry, and tenancy increased rapidly in the poorer land areas where mortgaged owners in great numbers lost their farms.

Wallaces' Farmer recently stated, as "land values went up, it became harder for tenants to buy, and harder for new buyers to hold on to their farms. A farmer with a heavy mortgage and a big interest load was likely to lose his farm and slip back into the ranks of tenants when hard times hit. Thus the land boom in good times prepared the way for farm bankruptcies in the bad times" 70/ (Fig. 16).

These facts have resulted in the extension of the heavily tenanted areas, a greater number of tenants being added between 1930 and 1935 to areas that have in the past been low tenancy areas than to those which have been high tenancy areas. 71/

It is well known that there are practically no sharecroppers in the Corn Belt, but there are many farm laborers, for tenants as well as owners employ hired men. Because a high rate of tenancy has developed only recently, and because tenants as well as owners are responsible for the control and management of the farms they operate, as yet no tenant caste status has developed. The tenant families participate practically equally with owners in all forms of institutional and community life, and most tenants still hope to become owners. But there is little doubt that this hope, decade by decade, has less possibility of materializing; otherwise, the tenancy rate would not be increasing nor the tenant belt of the area expanding. That the rural standard of living of the area will ever fall to the slum levels that prevail in some communities of the Cotton Belt is doubtful, for the middle-western tenant operates larger acreages, uses machines rather than woman and child labor, and usually lives in a house that was originally built by and for an owner-operator. He is more often the relative of his landlord and in every way is economically more in control of his own destiny than is the southern sharecropper. But the climb up the ladder has slowed down, tenants live in slightly poorer houses, and there are many evidences not only that the tenancy rate will continue to rise, but that the heavily tenanted areas will continue to spread unless checked by forces that have not been operating in past decades.

Conclusions

There is a vast difference between the characteristics of the northern and the southern tenant belts. The northern belt, with the

70/ Wallaces' Farmer, April 10, 1937.

71/ U. S. Chamber of Commerce. op. cit.

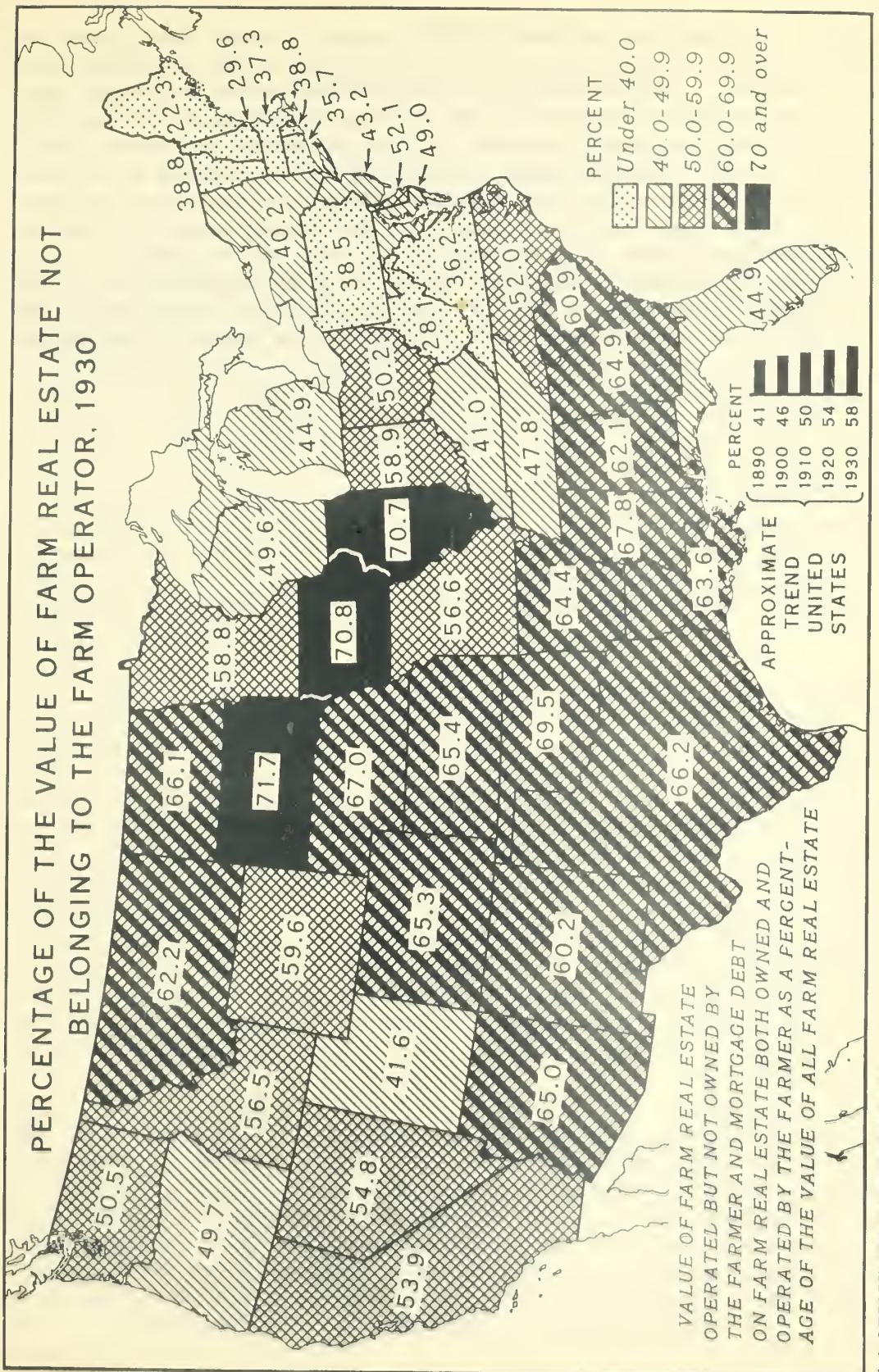


FIG. 16

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS

exception of the part that extends into the recent drought area, does not appear as a disadvantaged section measured by any other criterion used in this treatise. The contrary is true of the southern tenant belt, which is disadvantaged because of the widespread presence of low farm income, the almost universal presence of low standards of living, and a considerable extent of poor land. This area is not marked by a great number of farm laborers for the simple reason that sharecropping prevails. The larger portion of the area has been highly migrative because of the presence of these disadvantaging factors and because it is an area of high birthrates. Neither tenant belt is represented in the areas of highest intensity of relief, but the Southern tenant belt does appear as one of the outstanding rural rehabilitation areas of the Nation.

Chapter IV

FARM FAMILIES ON POOR LANDS

Number and Condition of Farm Families on Poor Lands

As land is the basic natural resource of all agriculture, it is inevitable that poor land unless skillfully handled will tend to handicap those who seek to farm it. The Report of the National Resources Board, December 1, 1934 estimates that approximately 75,000,000 acres of land being used for farming in the United States are "too poor for people to support themselves by crop farming," comprising 20,000,000 acres of crop land, 35,000,000 acres of pasture land, and 20,000,000 acres in other uses. 72/ Some of this land is rough and rocky, some is poorly drained, some lies in areas of scant rainfall, some is sand, and much of it is suffering from wind or water erosion. As long as these lands were not occupied by farming population and not subjected to cultivation or over-grazing, neither the nature of the soil nor the climate handicapped the lives of farm families. But, now they are all more or less populated, and something like a half million farm families are finding difficulty in making a living from them.

Many of these so-called poor-land areas were first occupied before any large body of accurate knowledge was available on types of soil and their best uses. Some were farmed for several generations before any great knowledge of soil erosion was available. Into many places early settlers carried farm practices which proved to be ill-adapted to the new localities. In some localities, other natural resources - wild game, forests, and mines - which supplied subsistence and cash income to supplement farming are now severely depleted. Furthermore, it is now apparent that the elimination of the forest cover and the plowing up of original sod has brought under cultivation considerable areas of land that should not have been turned to field crops. Sources of supplementary income and subsistence in a number of areas have been exhausted; and intensive cultivation has resulted in severe erosion of millions of acres of once fertile land.

72/ Maladjustments in Land Use in the United States, Part VI of the Supplementary Report of the Land Planning Committee to the National Resources Board, U. S. Govt. Printing Office, Washington, D. C., 1935, p. 2. These lands are problem type 1, defined in this report as "arable farms (exclusive of stock ranches) which are on land of such low productivity and/or are so scattered or isolated that arable farming is uneconomic and undesirable and should be gradually replaced by some other major use, i. e. extensive grazing, forestry, recreation, etc."

All of these things combined have served to make what may be called the "poor lands" of the Nation. These lands are not all poor in the sense that they are useless or worthless. They are, for the most part, lands which under their present uses and organization do not furnish an adequate base to support those families who seek to gain a living by farming them.

It was estimated in the Report of the National Resources Board previously cited, that there are 454,000 farms upon which live approximately that same number of farm families, who are located on these "poor lands." 73/ More detailed studies by the Land Use Planning Section of the Resettlement Administration estimate the number of such farms to be more than 586,000. Added to this number are 411,000 farms which need to be enlarged in order to adequately support the families who farm them. 74/ Thus, there are just slightly less than 1,000,000 American farm families living either on lands that are so poor, or on farms that are so small, that the families living on them are disadvantaged in their efforts to make a living.

Most of these families have already felt the impact of the disadvantaging factors. Not all have low standards of living, but most have, and all evidences point to the necessity of relocation of at least a part of these families as the only permanent solution to their problems. "Low incomes and low standards of living, low levels of community life and morale, financial difficulties of local governmental units, waste of individual and social effort, and the exploitation of people who are ignorant of the facts and conditions in these areas" are named by the National Resources Board as the "pronounced social ills" which prevail on these poor lands. 75/ It is easy to elaborate on these general characteristics.

Nowhere in rural America, except among the sharecroppers of the Cotton Belt, are so many poor and inadequate farm houses found as in some of the poor-land areas. In some of the mountain sections, thousands of farm families are living in houses no better than those constructed by their forefathers who first settled in these localities as pioneer semi-farmers, semi-hunters. The average value of farm dwellings in the five States of Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Arkansas is under \$500, and the average for the fourteen Southern States, including

73/ Ibid.

74/ Information furnished by Land Classification Unit, Land Use Planning Section, Division of Land Utilization, Resettlement Administration (now the Division of Land Economics of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics). These farms are defined as problem types 3a and 3b. "Farms too small to permit the introduction of pasture or forest or soil protecting crops needed for the improvement or protection of poor or eroding land" and "Farms too small for the effective use of farm machinery, rotations, or other conditions of efficient operation."

75/ National Resources Board Report, op. cit.

West Virginia but excluding Maryland, was only \$632 in 1930. 76/

A study of 1,935 families living in "submarginal land purchase areas" of Kentucky shows 28 percent of them living in log houses and 50 percent living in "box" houses; 63 families with more than five members each were living in one-room houses; and in five such cases, the families had ten or more members. 77/ It goes without saying that such homes are never equipped with running water or electricity. Many of them are without toilet facilities of any kind, many have a water supply that is unprotected from sewage, and many are without screened windows. Such homes are generally heated by fireplaces or stoves and lighted by kerosene lamps. In this study just cited, 1,110, or approximately 60 percent of the 1,935 homes, were equipped with but one lamp and 41 of them had none. Furthermore, 367 of these homes had fewer than 4 chairs and 277 of them had only one bed. Still worse, 73 of them had no chairs and 37 of them had no beds. 78/

The value of 228 houses included in a study of Knott County in the same State averaged \$340, ranging from \$20 to \$7,000. Twenty-eight percent of the home-makers interviewed in that county reported that the roof leaked. In a study of Grayson County in Kentucky it was found that the average value of houses was \$931, the range being from \$50 to \$8,000. 79/ In a recent study of 816 Appalachian Mountain families, it was revealed that about 75 percent of their homes were heated by fireplaces, and more than 90 percent of their homes were lighted by oil lamps. Approximately 38 percent used springs as their main water supply and less than 10 percent had telephones. 80/

In some semi-arid sections, where correct land-use adjustment has not yet been accomplished, thousands of families, after two or three generations of settlement, are still living in sod houses or modified dugouts. Population is so sparse that roads, schools, and churches, as well as other social institutions are inadequate and impoverished, so that school terms are sometimes shortened to less than 100 days per year, and many schools, because of the lack of tax evaluations and scarcity of

76/ Farm and Village Housing, Report of the Committee on Farm and Village Housing, Part VII, The President's Conf. on Home Building and Home Ownership, Washington, D. C. 1932.

77/ Morgan, Mack J., Unpublished Kentucky study of 7 different purchase areas of submarginal lands considered for purchase by the Division of Land Utilization of the Resettlement Administration.

78/ Ibid.

79/ Williams, Faith M. et al. Variations in Farm-Family Living, in Economic and Social Problems and Conditions of the Southern Appalachians, Misc. Publ. 205, U. S. Dept. of Agr., Jan. 1935, p. 138.

80/ Dodson, L. S., Unpublished study entitled Standards of Living in Four Appalachian Mountain Counties, U. S. Dept. of Agr. August 1937.

pupils, are able to operate only because they receive income from sources outside of the districts. In areas where the taxable valuations are steadily decreasing, support for public institutions and facilities must automatically decrease. In some localities where, by law, schools must be kept open and transportation furnished to pupils, the cost of schooling per pupil, including transportation, becomes absurdly excessive. In areas where evacuation of population has been slowly taking place, school attendance is steadily diminishing, with the result that schools are being abandoned. Others are being operated with so few pupils per school that the maintenance per school in the area is exceedingly costly. 81/

This also holds true in rural non-agricultural areas such as the cut-over country in northern Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan, where the land is better suited to forestry than to cultivation. Here there are small, isolated schools which have small enrollment, inadequate teaching facilities, short school terms, and difficult and expensive school and teacher supervision. One survey township in northeastern Wisconsin, with more than three-fourths of its land area in a county forest had only 7 families and one hermit living in it. Through the cooperation of the Wisconsin Conservation Department and the county, the land was bought for a county forest, the families were relocated, the buildings taken down, and the materials salvaged. Since this plan left the township with no school children, the hermit being the only remaining resident, the school district is to be discontinued as a separate unit and the territory added to another district. 82/

In another township, in Lincoln County, Wisconsin, there were 35 settlers, only 22 of whom were sending children to school. Two of these families, partially supported by the State and county, supplied 11 of the 52 children enrolled in school, and society was contributing to the support of one of them by paying the father \$450 per year to transport his own children to school. This man did not farm and he is reported to have remarked, "I haven't worked a day in my life and don't intend to." 83/ Here again, the State and county could well profit by relocating these families and turning the land to its proper use, forestry, rather than contributing to unreasonable costs for the maintenance of social institutions.

In some parts of the Lake States Cut-Over area, detailed studies showed as high as 80 percent of the families on relief, and one study of

81/ Renne, Roland R., Organization and Costs of Montana Schools, Bull. No. 325, Agr. Exp. Sta., Bozeman, Mont., Aug. 1936.

82/ Rowlands, W. A., Rural Zoning - Its Influence on Public Health and Schools, Spec. Cir., Ext. Serv., Univ. of Wis., Madison, Wis., July 1936.

83/ Hibbard, B. H., Hartman, W. A. and Sparhawk, W. N., Use and Taxation of Land in Lincoln County, Wisconsin, Bull. No. 406, Wis. Agr. Exp. Sta., Madison, Wis., Jan. 1929. p. 20.

105 such families showed that 34 percent of their total annual gross income came from relief. Out of annual incomes of about \$800, including relief, they were compelled to spend 56.6 percent of it for food and 14.4 percent for clothing. After these families had meagerly provided for other physical necessities, they had left only \$18 with which to provide for all so-called "advancement" goods and services - personal goods, recreation, religion, charity, education, and insurance. Village families in these areas were shown to suffer equal or greater handicaps. 84/

To these data should be added those presented in chapter III on tenancy, for in large areas of the South tenancy and poor lands appear together. This is especially true of those sections of the South where erosion has been extremely severe. Note the following description: "At another place I stopped to talk with a sweet old lady I saw sitting on the dilapidated porch of what had been, once upon a time, a fine home. Fifty years ago, as a bride of twenty, she and her young husband started life on 150 acres of fertile land. They prospered. They bought more land, and then more, until finally they had 1,500 acres and were really rich. Their good earth, in the hands of sharecroppers, would, they thought, provide for them forever, and so with nothing to worry about they went abroad when they wanted to or spent their winters in New York.

"Today that old couple is penniless. I went inside the house and found it stripped of everything except the barest necessities. Heirlooms, keepsakes, antiques, furniture - all had been sold to pay taxes. I went outside, looked at the land and found it stripped of all the topsoil. On this place complete devastation has arrived." 85/

Much of the land, which is now reducing to poverty those who attempt to farm it, can be salvaged by soil-erosion control or changed use, so it would be a mistake to assume that all farm families now living on "poor" or "severely eroding" lands must abandon their farms. No such conclusion is implied in the information that follows. Here we are only attempting to describe the location of such land areas and present the character of the disadvantaging factors in each of them.

Like practically every other disadvantaging factor in American rural life, poor lands are to be found in all sections of the Nation. But there are certain areas into which, in the past, population has flowed and now lives, which are likely to "starve some farm families to death," or reduce them to exceedingly low levels of living if all who now live there seek to gain a living from the land. It is to these areas we now turn our attention. They are the Cotton Belt or Southern Erosive Lands; the Appalachian-Ozark Rough Highlands; the Semi-arid

84/ Kirkpatrick, E. L., Needed Standards of Living for Rural Resettlement, Wis. Rural Rehab. Div., Resettlement Administration, Madison, Wis., May 1936. (A Survey of 290 Families in the Crandon, Wisconsin Land Purchase Area.)

85/ White, Owen P., All Washed Up, Collier's Magazine, September 1934.

Plains; the Lake States Cut-Over land; and the Heavily Wooded Areas of the North Pacific Coast. 86/ (See Figures 17 and 18.)

Areas of Concentration

The Cotton Belt or Southern Erosive Lands

In geographic extent as well as the number of communities and families affected thereby, the poor lands of the Eastern Cotton Belt, while somewhat scattered, cover vast areas. This means that in one of our main agricultural regions much of the land is no longer suited to the uses to which it is being put. Various influences have contributed to this fact. The continued cultivation of row-crops like cotton and tobacco, without the use of soil-protecting and soil-building practices, has accelerated surface erosion. Original fertility has diminished because cotton and tobacco do not restore plant food to the soil, which is by nature deficient in it. In some sections, the soil was originally unsuited for cultivated crops, but, on the whole, it is correct to say that improper farming methods rather than a lack of original fertility, have rendered submarginal a large part of the lands in the Cotton Belt.

The far-reaching general effects of these short-sighted land uses are evidenced in seriously dislocated and disorganized rural communities, according to a recent study made in Georgia. 87/ Among those enumerated are the following:

Under a one-crop system, landless tenant and cropper farm operators are dominant, with little hope of more than a subsistence living. Few of them have the working equipment necessary to more profitable enterprises. Frequent moving from farm to farm contributes to community instability. Non-resident owners and "furnish dealers" perpetuate the wasteful land-use practices. The system stifles the human resources of rural areas.

There is an unwarranted number of small town and country bank failures and many of the old established credit institutions become unable to continue business. Reversion of a high proportion of land to unwilling owners is a recent trend in large-scale ownerships. There is instability of ownership in many localities and financially embarrassed county and local governments are common. In areas where the situation is most acute, roads are poorly kept, schools are maintained only with difficulty, and untold suffering and loss result from lack of proper medical care in rural areas.

86/ Report, National Resources Board, op. cit.

87/ Hartman, W. A. and Wooten, H. H., Georgia Land Use Problems, Bull. No. 191, Georgia Experiment Station, Experiment, Ga., May 1935. p. 13.

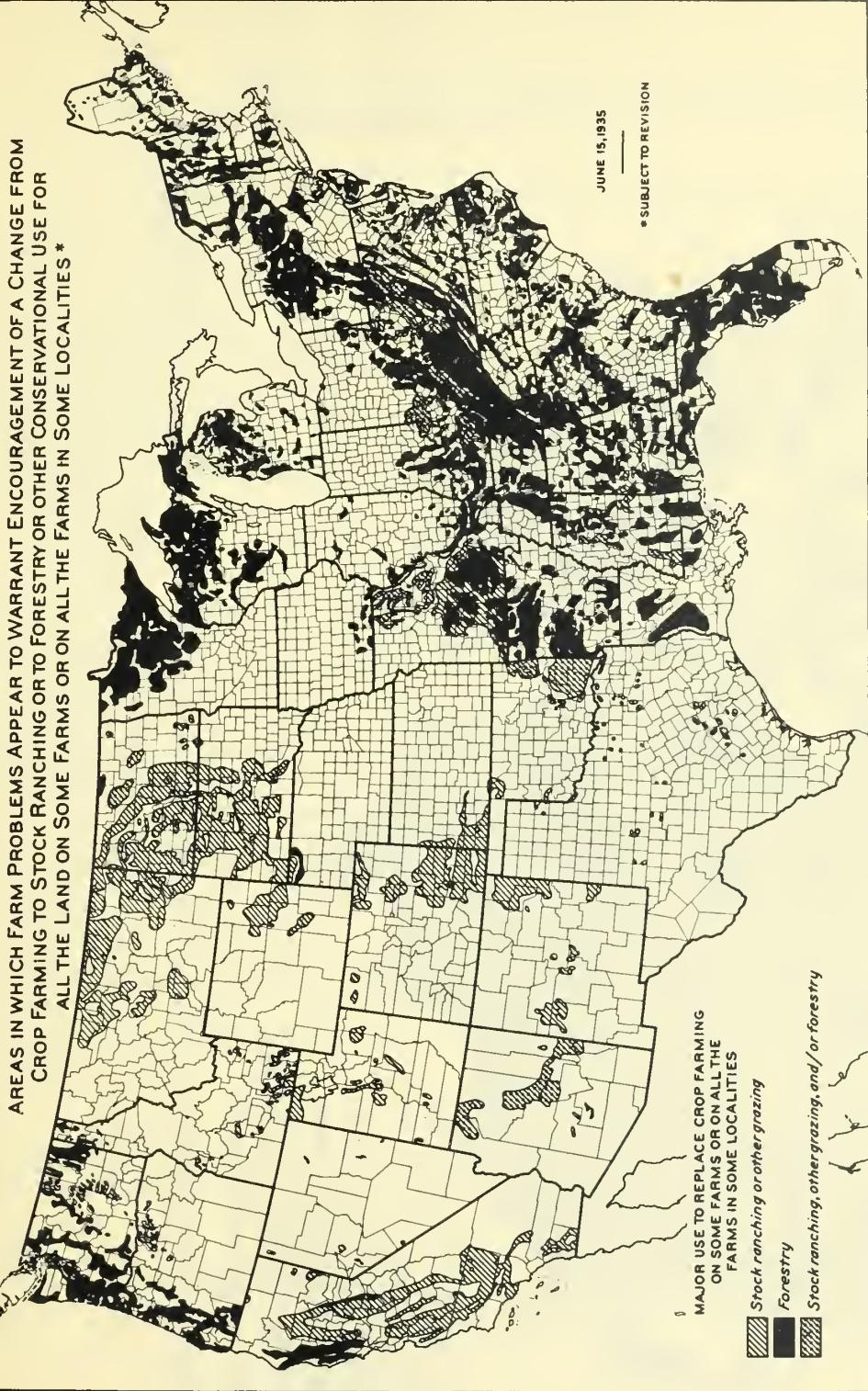
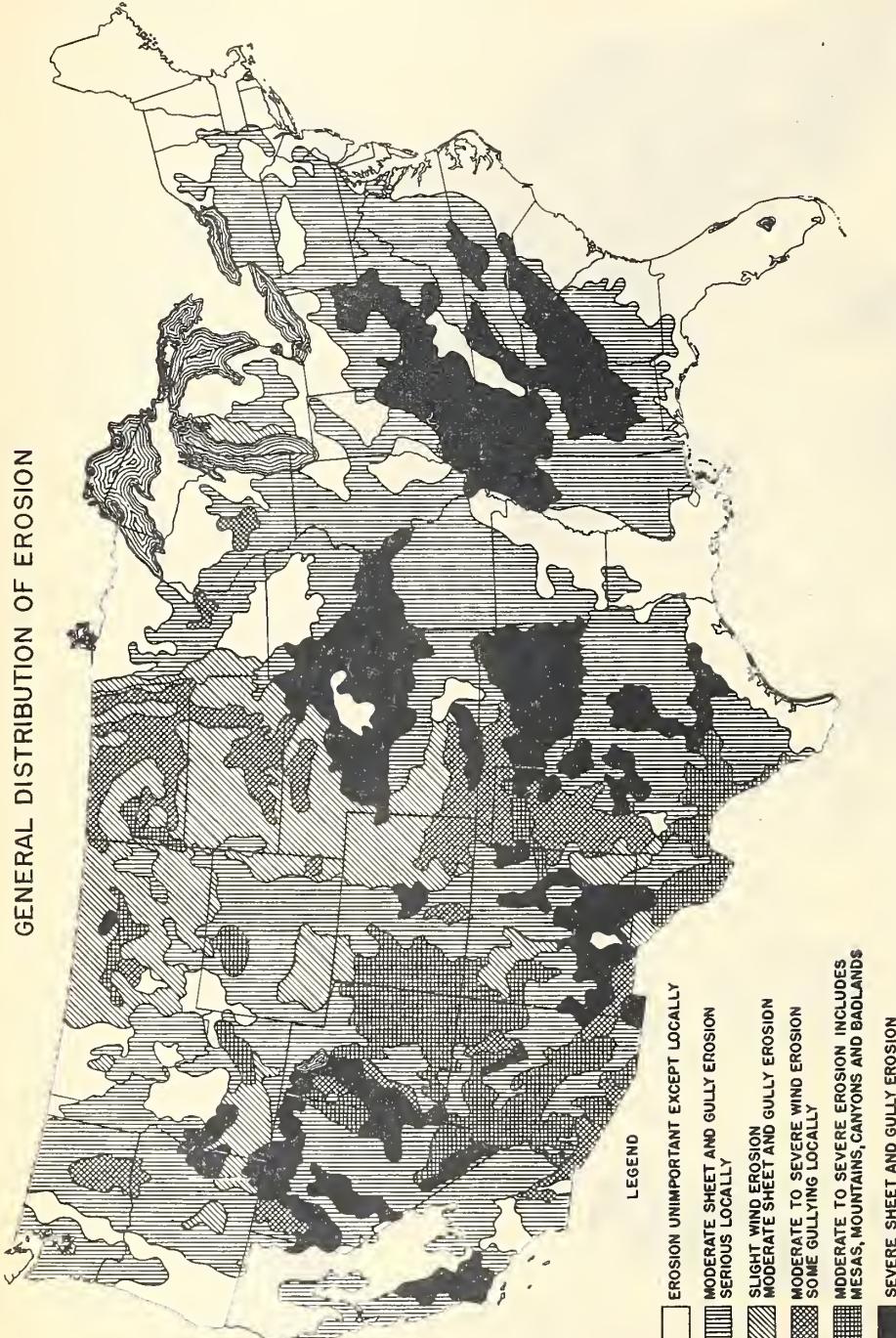


FIG. 17. Within the shaded areas on this map, some of the crop farms (arable farms) should ultimately be replaced by stock ranches, forests, or other properties, mainly because experience has demonstrated the land on them to be too poor to provide, through crop farming, adequate family living, and support the public institutions and services that are required by farm communities. It is calculated by the National Resources Board that there are probably not less than 450,000 farms, covering about 75,000,000 acres, and containing 20,000,000 acres of crop land and 35,000,000 acres of pasture, too poor for people to support themselves by crop farming. Further analysis is being made by the Division of Land Economics of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics will make considerable change in the land classified as needing definite adjustment in use. The only changes which need be mentioned for the purposes of this discussion are as follows: (1) a considerably larger portion of eastern Wyoming has been classified as marginal; (2) the so-called "Dust Bowl" area is made to include portions of western Oklahoma and northwestern Texas; (3) southern Iowa and northern Missouri are no longer classed as badly marginal; and (4) a fairly large area in eastern Texas which does not appear in this figure is added.

GENERAL DISTRIBUTION OF EROSION



PREPARED BY S.C.S. DRAFTING UNIT

AUGUST, 1936

FIG. 18. A comparison of this map with Figure 17 shows that severely eroding areas and "poor land" areas are not always identical. The map is presented to show two things: (1) that "severe sheet and gully erosion" prevail in two of the large "poor land" areas described in this publication, namely, the Appalachian and Cotton Belt Areas, and that "moderate to severe erosion" of one or more kinds prevails in all other "poor land" areas, except those which are "flooded"; and (2) that "severe erosion" appears on some good lands. Severe erosion, of course, unless checked will ultimately reduce the good lands to the condition of poor lands.

More than 37,000 farms, or 15 percent of all in Georgia, are located on land from which only low incomes, low living standards, and below-average community facilities are possible to attain. The families stranded on these farms have little or no opportunity to improve their economic or social status even with more favorable non-depression conditions. 88/

The many submarginal land areas of this type are depressing to agriculture and rural life throughout most of this large region, as they comprise something less than half of the Cotton Belt. The areas are widely distributed, in central South Carolina, northwestern Georgia, central and southwest Alabama, western Louisiana, southern Arkansas, and eastern Texas. In them, the land is partly cut-over and has never possessed great fertility. While other factors, such as small size of holdings and conditions of tenancy, tend to dwarf farm incomes, it can be safely assumed that in submarginal land sections poor fertility is the main cause of rural poverty.

Appalachian-Ozark Rough Highlands

The submarginality of farm lands in the Appalachian-Ozark region is largely the result of unguided settlement and unrestricted exploitation of natural resources. The Appalachian region (Fig. 17) runs from northern Pennsylvania southwestward through West Virginia, eastern Kentucky, western Virginia, North Carolina, and central Tennessee. The Ozark region covers large areas of southern Missouri and northern and western Arkansas.

The pioneers first settled on only the good lands of the valley bottoms, but the population grew so rapidly that the steep and less fertile hillsides had to be cleared for crop growing. In the narrow valleys, holdings were small and they barely provided a living for the farm family. Conditions improved when mining and lumbering offered additional employment and income; but ruthless exploitation nearly exhausted the mineral resources and destroyed the once luxuriant growth of timber.

Except for the bottom lands of the valleys, the soil, most of which had been under forest cover, is now deficient in humus. Continuous cultivation on the steep hillsides, with rainfall averaging over 50 inches in some parts of the region, has led to widespread erosion and loss of fertility. Above all, the farms are too small to allow for a well-rounded farming system, and, as indicated by the predominance of self-sufficient and part-time farms, (see Figs. 5 and 6) agriculture has never been more than a makeshift throughout the region.

Fully as many families are affected here as in the Cotton Belt. The conditions under which they live are due to a combination of poor

fertility of the land, relative isolation, soil erosion, and high birth rates. In the southern Appalachians, railway facilities are limited to branch roads that were constructed for removing timber and coal, except the main ones skirting the northern and southern boundaries. Highways are unimproved and many localities "are still accessible only by horseback or by jolt wagon." 89/ In the Blue Ridge Mountain section, arable land is scattered in the small coves, so that farming necessarily is patchy. The pressure of population has forced all tillable plots into cultivation and much soil that was originally fertile has been depleted through excessive cropping. Widely scattered in settlement, the many small groups of families cannot be adequately served by schools, churches, or other social agencies and facilities.

In the Cumberland-Ozark Hills section, a large part that was once a low plateau has been changed by geologic erosion into an elaborately branching system of narrow steep-sided valleys separated by winding knife-edged ridges. The present appearance is that of a rugged hill country showing high relief in some portions and low in others. Finally, there are the border sections between this region and the better agricultural lands on the west and north, where "many of the more hilly farms have been impoverished by long cultivation. Buildings are falling into disrepair, local markets have dwindled with the passing of lumbering, quarrying, and other local industries, and tax delinquency is becoming a serious problem." 90/

These conditions, which have been gradually coming to a focus for many years, were made even more precarious throughout the entire region by the impact of the depression. Furthermore, the economic crisis has called our attention to a considerable number of farmers who were formerly employed part-time in mining and lumbering. Work opportunities here have largely disappeared, and these people are now left stranded on submarginal farms. Moreover, many persons who were dropped from the pay rolls in manufacturing or commercial centers have returned to the region for subsistence, and thus increased the total of poor land under cultivation.

Lake States Cut-Over Area

In contrast to the Appalachian-Ozarks, the Lake States Cut-Over area, covering the northern sections of Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota, was never settled primarily for agricultural purposes. The rich mineral and timber resources attracted settlers, and farming was generally on a part-time basis. When the natural resources were exhausted, miners and lumbermen who were left stranded turned to agriculture for a living. Moreover, the lumber companies succeeded in bringing additional settlers to the lands from which they had removed the timber.

89/ National Resources Board Report, op. cit., p. 21.

90/ Ibid.

Most of the area is not at all suited to farming because of the poor soil and adverse climatic conditions. Even in the better sections, only potatoes, rye, hay, and other quick-maturing crops can be grown, for the winters are severe and the growing season is short. Moreover, clearing the land of pine stumps is such a long costly process, that many of the farms have not enough tillable acreage. Under these conditions agriculture cannot be successful; it is just sufficient to provide foodstuffs for the farmer and his family. In many cases it is carried on only as a part-time occupation, and work off the farm must furnish the greater part of the income.

For families of this area, adequate social institutions like churches, schools, and county government are impossible except on a State or Federal grant-in-aid basis. Scattered farm settlement makes the cost of such facilities exorbitant. For example, a recent study showed one part of the Minnesota poor land section to have road costs that averaged more than \$90 per family, whereas only \$7 were being collected. School transportation costs amounted to more than \$185 per family although only \$6 was obtained from local sources.

Throughout the entire area settlement is scattered. Most families are still struggling under the double load of clearing land and building homes, with the additional burden of trying to make a bare living. Many of the settlers represent foreign nationality groups, some of whom are willing to accept noticeably low living standards. 91/

The Semi-Arid Plains

The semi-arid parts of the Great Plains constitute another important maladjusted land area of major importance. With few exceptions, the soils are generally fertile; their submarginal character is the result of climatic conditions and unsuitable farming methods. Precipitation is low and frequently occurs during the wrong season of the year. A slight reduction of moisture seriously affects the crop yields. Drought periods are recurrent. High winds are characteristic of the whole region, and during a prolonged deficiency of rainfall, the plowed land is subject to severe wind erosion.

In the beginning of settlement, the Great Plains were cattle country, but after the 1860's, settlers in search of farm land began to pour into the region and they have succeeded in making it temporarily one of the most important farming regions in the United States.

The region is in fact two areas. The northern section covers larger portions, namely western North and South Dakota, northeastern Montana, a considerable portion of eastern Wyoming, and a small portion of

northeastern Nebraska; the southern and smaller section covers parts of eastern Colorado, southwestern Kansas, western Oklahoma, northwestern Texas, and northeastern New Mexico.

The homestead policy of the Government and the eagerness of the railroad companies to sell to settlers the large tracts they had acquired induced speculation with its resultant abuses. Agricultural inventions helped to bring wide stretches of new land under the plow. Wheat became the principal crop and farming was carried on as a purely commercial enterprise. As wheat lends itself to machine operations on a large scale, and as it seemed to be the most remunerative crop for the region, there was little rotation and diversification of crops and almost no adaptation of farming to moisture conditions.

The Federal homestead policy proved a disadvantage in another respect. The traditional quarter- and half-sections allowed to the settlers are inadequate to provide sufficient income under the dry-farming methods required. Consequently, many of the farms, especially in the northern part of the Great Plains, are too small, overcropping ensues, and the fertility of the soil is further endangered.

The problems of the Great Plains' agriculture, however, do not arise solely from these factors. Settlement here has been without guidance so that land of low fertility has been put into cultivation. Montana presents a typical example. An analysis of the soils of 12 counties in which farm lands were classified in 4 grades showed that 35 percent fall in the lowest grade and are quite unsuited to the type of grain farming that is practiced in the area. 92/

Because settlement sometimes brought land into cultivation that should not have been farmed and because improper practices made the region an easy prey for adverse climatic conditions, farming on the Great Plains has been a risky venture. Years of good crops may be followed by years of drought and crop failure. The wheat lands in dry periods are subject to extremely severe wind erosion. It is estimated that the dust storm of May 11, 1934, moved 300 million tons of fertile top soil off the Great Plains. As one writer described this devastation, ". . . the farms of the Dust Bowl, - which includes western Oklahoma, western Kansas, eastern Colorado, the panhandle of Texas and parts of Wyoming, - blew clear out to the Atlantic Ocean, 2,000 miles away. On a single day 300 million tons of top soil was lifted from the Great Plains, never to return, and planted in places where it would spread the maximum of damage and discomfort. Authentic desert sand dunes were laid down. People began to

92/ Renne, Roland R., Land Ownership and Tenure, Part IV, Readjusting Montana's Agriculture, Bulletin No. 310, Agr. Exp. Sta. Bozeman, Montana, Feb. 1936. p. 21.

die of dust pneumonia." 93/

Somewhat more realistically, in 14 southwestern counties of Kansas, a survey in 1936 disclosed that 54 percent of the land planted to small grains (mainly wheat) had been blown out. 94/ With the fertility of the soil seriously impaired by the prolonged drought, many farmers no longer worked their land. In 1936, it was found that in 45 counties of five States in the Southern Great Plains, nearly 20 percent of the total crop land was lying idle. 95/ Moreover, many families left the land entirely. In the 45 counties, one out of every 4 of all farm dwellings, numbering more than 25,000, have been vacated within the last 2 or 3 years. 96/ The abandoned lands are now constituting a menace to the remaining farm families because nothing is done to check or prevent wind erosion. There can be no doubt that the existence of suit-case farming made possible by the high degree of mechanization and the practice of allowing the operator to grow wheat without living on the land, is to a large degree responsible for the improper use of the land and the ensuing destruction of soil fertility.

Severe sheet and gully erosion have taken place in parts of Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. Much of the Northern Great Plains and certain smaller sections of the Southern Plains have been recommended for removal from cultivation and return to stock ranching and other grazing. Crop variation and adaptation to moisture conditions are advocated to alleviate conditions where farmers, especially in recent years, have been unable to make incomes that will maintain the accustomed standards of living.

Pacific Coast Heavily Wooded Areas

Along the coast of Oregon and Washington runs a more-or-less contiguous strip of land that is so heavily wooded it cannot be economically cleared for cultivation. Clearing is a costly process — amounting to \$150 to \$200 per acre in some localities. The farms often comprise only a minimum of cleared land, for markets are so far away that heavy investment is never likely to pay. By separate areas they have been characterized as "scratch farms," "stump ranches," or "shoestring valley holdings." The cut-over land, of which they are composed, is in most cases of poor quality and very unsuitable for agriculture.

In narrow valleys or on mountain sides, primarily, the farms are scattered and isolated. Social services and institutions are costly and

93/ Chase, Stuart, Rich Land Poor Land, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, 1936, p. 38.

94/ Land Use Survey of the Southern Great Plains 1936, Land Use Planning Section, Land Utilization Division, Resettlement Administration, p. 16.

95/ Ibid, p. 8.

96/ Ibid, p. 17.

insufficient, for the farmers are not able to pay high taxes. In many cases, work off the farm has to supplement income from farming. For some parts of this section, return to forests has been recommended, with farming on a part-time basis for those employed in forestry and logging operations. For others, the change into grazing ranges seems most advisable. In only a few cases, intensification of production on the small farms offers a way out. The number of people living in this area is not great, but new settlement is constantly going on, as the lumber companies are selling their cut-over lands to unsuspecting settlers. This is especially significant in view of the fact that many of the drought-caught farmers from the Northern Great Plains have emigrated into the western parts of Washington and Oregon.

The situation in the northern coastal section of California is similar to that farther north, but the Sacramento Valley and the section south of it have proportionately more shoestring valleys and mountain ridges where farms are especially isolated and far from markets. Precipitation is low, irrigation is too expensive for the poor land, and dry farming does not bring sufficient yields to cover expenses. Thus the farmers are not able to eke out more than a scanty and precarious living. It has been recommended, therefore, that the agricultural lands of this section be turned into all-year pastures, with some cropland for a feed basis.

Conclusions

The relationship of the poor-land areas of the Nation to other disadvantaged areas is unique in some cases, in that it correlates with such a relatively few other indices of disadvantage. Bad-land areas are practically always low-income areas and relatively low-standard-of-living areas. But persons on the lower rungs of the agricultural ladder, that is, laborers and tenants, are found in only small numbers in poor-land areas. Startlingly enough, poor-land areas have not been the outstanding migrative areas, and during the period of the depression they were used as shelters, so to speak, for the unemployed and distressed of other areas. It was almost automatic, therefore, that they have been areas of high relief in recent years, for they did not have ample natural resources upon which to sustain their resident population, and the retention of their own natural increase during the depression, plus the influx of additional population subjected them to strain they could not bear, and outside assistance became necessary.

Chapter V

MIGRATING FARM FAMILIES

Number and General Conditions

No national population is or has been more mobile than that of the United States. There are relatively few families in the Nation today all members of which live in the communities where their parents were born and reared. For generations, the people of this country, by the millions, have moved about in search of what they believed or hoped were better economic or cultural advantages. That their hopes were not always realized is beside the point in considering the causes of migration. They moved because they expected to "better themselves" in one way or another. To say that they believed there were greater opportunities elsewhere is the same as to say that they believed themselves to be relatively disadvantaged in the localities from which they moved.

Whether tides of migration have flowed westward with the geographic expansion of the Nation, cityward with the expansion of industry, landward because of lack of urban employment during the depression, or whether it is now the ceaseless shifting of sharecroppers and migratory farm laborers, it is probably safe to say that these migrants have sought to move from what they thought were relatively disadvantaging to relatively advantaging locations and conditions. Therefore, although the authors are highly aware of the fact that many such moves have been blind and mistaken in their results and that many times the best new locations have not been selected or even known, they believe that a study of rural migration - especially out-migration - areas yields some index to disadvantaging conditions in American agriculture.

Migration from farms in the United States is, and has generally been, of four types: first, there was that type of migration by which the agricultural lands of the Nation were progressively occupied by white settlement. This migration was from east to west, of persons who had previously been located in the original colonies and who, later in some of the earlier settled areas, had moved west to occupy some of the so-called free lands. To this type of migrants was added the flood of foreign-born who, for approximately 50 years, flowed into this country, increasing the speed with which our agricultural areas would otherwise have been settled.

The second type of migration was that which had been going on to some extent all during our national development, but which greatly increased about the time the pronounced westward expansion came to an end. It was the flow of population from country areas to towns and cities.

The third kind was a movement from farm to farm, which probably began in the colonial period and which has continued without interruption

in American rural life. It is today most pronounced among the farm tenants, especially those who are sharecroppers.

The fourth type is one of relatively recent development and is represented by migratory farm laborers.

In the westward migrations of population during the pioneering period, population flowed into many areas from which it was later compelled to withdraw because of physical or economic conditions. What percentage of the persons and families who moved westward with the tide of pioneer migration turned back to their native locations, how many settled for only a short time and moved on west to other locations, is not known. In each case where the individual or family lived in the new location for as long as a decade, the fact of the location became recorded in the Census reports, and from a study of these reports, it is revealed that large areas settled during one period were later to a considerable extent evacuated or partially evacuated. The most extreme recession of settlement was in the late 1880's and early 1890's, when drought and economic depression almost depopulated certain parts of the so-called drought States, after these places had been settled for a decade or more.

Between 1890 and 1900, 110 counties in Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, the Dakotas, Montana, Wyoming, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Texas lost population. In 27 counties, the loss was 33 1/3 percent or over, and in 6 counties the loss amounted to more than 50 percent of the total population which was there in 1890. More detailed studies of local areas indicate that the decline in some of them was even greater between 1885 and 1890 than in the years immediately following 1890. 97/

A similar recession has occurred during the last few years in which economic depression and drought have again combined to make successful occupancy impossible in some of these areas. Eighty-six out of the same 110 counties that lost population between 1890 and 1900 lost farm population between 1930 and 1935.

As a result of the early westward migrations, many settled rural communities had less population in 1820 than they had had in 1790. The migrants abandoned old locations in order to grasp the opportunities that then existed in the new lands, chiefly east of the Appalachian Mountains. 98/ Probably the only reason that similar abandonment was not evident during the succeeding decades, as population in ever greater numbers moved west, was that foreign immigrants flowed into the Nation in large enough numbers to take the places of native Americans who were abandoning locations farther east to move westward. Otherwise, the greater land

97/ Malin, James C., The Turnover of Farm Population in Kansas, Kansas State Historical Quarterly, Vol. IV, No. 4, Topeka, Kansas, 1935, pp. 339-72. Edwards, Allen D., Influence of Drought and Depression on a Rural Community - A Case Study in Haskell County, Kansas. (Unpublished.)

98/ Goodrich, et al., Migration and Economic Opportunity, The Report of the Study of Population Redistribution, Univ. of Pa. Press, Philadelphia, Pa., 1936, Chap. IX.

opportunities of the West would have depleted the population of areas from which the migrants came.

In the rural-urban migration, which became marked after 1900, there is considerable evidence that the poor land areas - that is, areas with low economic and social advantages - contributed far more than their share to the cityward drift, 99/ and had it not been for the fact that these poor land areas were areas of high birth rates, land abandonment within them would have been marked. Although the flow of population from rural to urban areas has been continuous, except for the year 1932 when there was a net migration to rural areas, it has been more predominant in some areas of the country than in others.

The majority of migrants out of the South are now going into Northern and Middle Western cities. According to the 1930 Census, nearly one-half of the people born in 13 Southern States have moved out and are now living in other than Southern States. Eliminating all interchange of population among these 13 Southern States and all migrations to States bordering on the north and west, we find three major streams out of the South: (1) to the Northeast, chiefly to New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, coming largely from Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Florida; (2) to the Middle West, chiefly to Ohio, Illinois, Missouri, and Michigan, mainly from Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Kentucky; and (3) to the west and northwest, mostly to Colorado, Arizona, and California, and coming in greatest numbers from Louisiana, Arkansas, Texas, and Oklahoma. Almost one-third of the migrants went to 12 northern and middle western cities, chiefly Chicago, New York, Detroit, and Philadelphia. Great proportions in every direction went into urban areas, and more of the others went into rural non-farm than farm areas.

The available statistics on the movement from farm to farm, do not show the comparative advantages in the occupancy of one farm with another. It can probably go without question, however, that even among the share-croppers, the chief cause for this ceaseless movement is a desire to obtain greater opportunity, or at least to escape from conditions that the farmer and his family find to be disadvantaging to them, either economically or socially.

The area of heaviest farm-to-farm migration is in the Cotton Belt, including the States of Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, and the Carolinas. (See Figures 19 and 20). Here it is a correlative of the high percentage of tenancy and share-cropping throughout the area. In Arizona, and in Colorado where there is also considerable shifting of farm population, it can be largely attributed to the series of droughts which, year after year, have forced farmers to take up new farms in order to escape impossible conditions for making a living - to find better farms or at least farms that had suffered

99/ Goodrich et al., op. cit.,

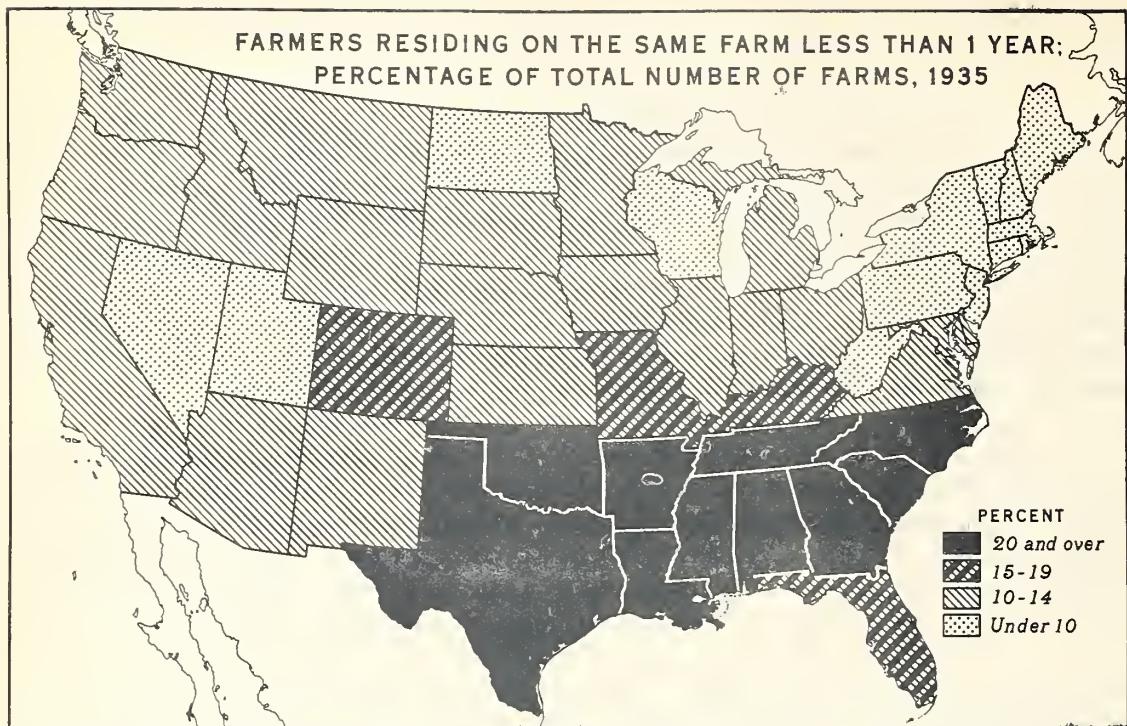


FIG. 19

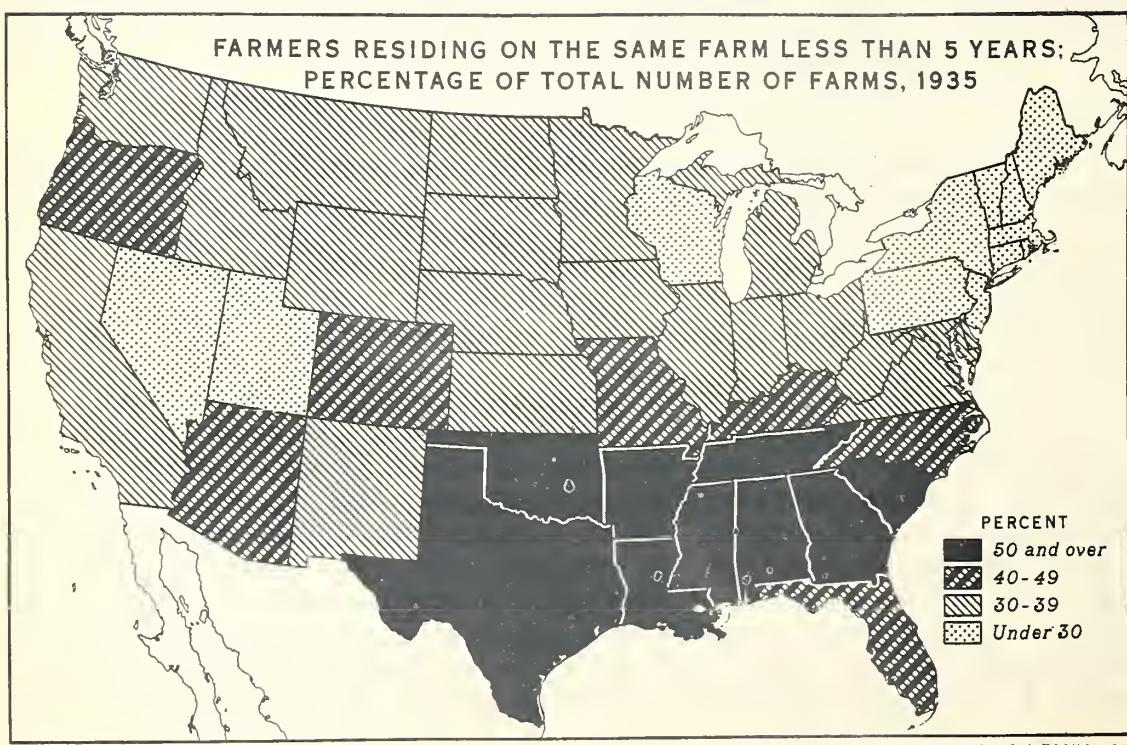


FIG. 20

less seriously from adverse weather conditions. In Oregon there was considerable in-migration from the drought States creating unstable farm occupancy. The shifting of people from one farm to another in Kentucky is found chiefly in the good land areas of the State, where the principal cash crop is tobacco and where a great many tenants are engaged in the production of it. ^{100/} Tenants in this area move 5 or 6 times more frequently than owners when measured in terms of residence on the same farm less than 1 year. (Figure 19).

The migration of agricultural workers in the United States has been described in chapter II in some detail. While it is not a recent development in American agriculture and while in some areas, as in the Wheat Belt, mechanization has reduced the necessity for seasonal workers and thus the necessity for migration of workers, in some sections of the Nation hired farm laborers have become concentrated in great numbers and move almost ceaselessly throughout the year. On the Pacific Coast for example, and especially in California, this type of migration is more prevalent than anywhere else in the country. With the prospect of increasing mechanization in the Cotton Belt, however, it is possible that the South will become the most pronounced area in which this seasonal type of migration is found.

In the recent somewhat detailed studies of migratory agricultural laborers, facts have been presented to indicate that a high percentage of them come from areas which in recent years have suffered from disadvantaging conditions. In a study of the persons entering California to seek employment between June 1 and June 30, 1937, it was found that 51 percent came from the 10 Great Plain States, with Oklahoma alone contributing 26 percent of the total. Thus it may be seen that both disadvantaging conditions of a long-time character and more or less temporary conditions caused by droughts, floods, and other catastrophes have contributed to the migration of agricultural workers.

These shifts usually take place in January, February, and March, with the peak in February, when tenants move about during the dull season looking for a new location for the crop year. In Missouri, the movement of persons from farm to farm is again a correlative of tenancy, whereas in Florida, always a highly migrative State, it is due to an increasing migration of hired agricultural workers, chiefly seasonal workers who come into the State in January and remain only through the truck and fruit season, or until May or June, and then move out to follow the harvest seasons wherever they may be.

Although the assumption is probably valid that people generally move with the hope or expectation that they will improve their economic and social conditions, it must be recognized that the shifting about disturbs the stability of family life, and that communities out of which or into which are moving any great numbers of families are, in the subtler aspects of community or neighborhood life, in a continual process of adjustment.

^{100/} Nicholls, W. D., Farm Tenancy in Central Kentucky, Bull. No. 303, Agr. Exp. Sta., Lexington, Ky., April 1930.

For this reason, probably above all others, American community life has been to a high degree unstable. This was true during the pioneering period and remains true today.

It is not assumed in this discussion that mobility as such is necessarily an evil. Rather it is agreed that mobility as a normal expression of choice on the part of the farm family in seeking a better, or supposedly better, situation is not incompatible with the best interests of society. Enforced immobility is as much to be deplored as too much mobility. On the other hand, it can readily be appreciated by everyone that conditions which impel, if not compel, people to move from place to place at frequent intervals are incompatible with the best interests of individuals as well as communities. Such conditions disrupt family life and destroy the customary social affiliations that every normal family desires and needs. Moreover, excessive instability creates in growing children a sense of psychological as well as economic insecurity which makes for abnormal family life. The real menace of the situation lies in the fact that generations of children grow to maturity inured to a life of instability which tends to become their own ideal and mode of life, and thus the unhappy condition is perpetuated.

According to the best estimates, there were approximately 50,000,000 moves either from farms to towns and cities or to farms from towns and cities in the 17-year period from January 1, 1920 to January 1, 1937. 101/ It is probable that, counted in this number of moves, were persons who moved a number of times. But each move introduced an element of instability into the community which the migrant left or the community into which he came. In addition to the urban-rural migration, there are more than a million farm families who move from one farm to another each year. 102/

Areas of Emigration (Out-Migration)

In attempting to use migration as an index to disadvantaging conditions, it is necessary to assume that, by and large, persons do move out of areas which they deem to be disadvantageous in relation to opportunities which they believe to lie elsewhere. 103/ It is, therefore, to areas of emigration, or out-migration, that we call the reader's attention at this time.

Migration, 1920 to 1930

From Figure 21, based upon migration data for the decade 1920-1930, it can be seen that the areas from which rural population was moving cover

101/ Farm Population Estimates, January 1, 1937.

102/ U. S. Census of Agriculture, 1935.

103/ No student of population migration would assert that this is a completely trustworthy index, but practically all studies of migration indicate that it is what might be called a cue to situations. The reader should therefore accept the data presented here as not absolute but indicative.

NOTE: ONE-PAGE BULLETIN ILLUSTRATION

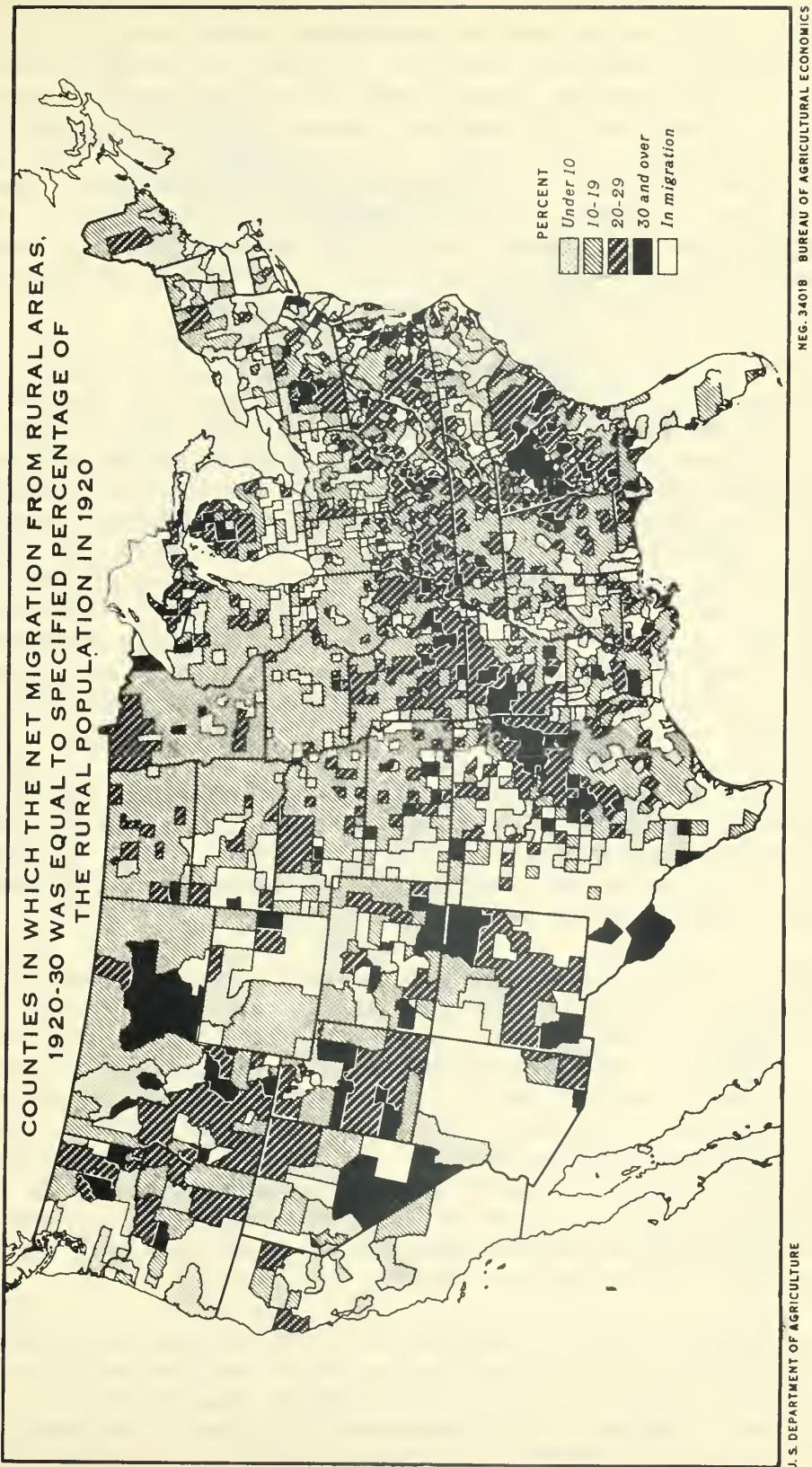


FIG. 21

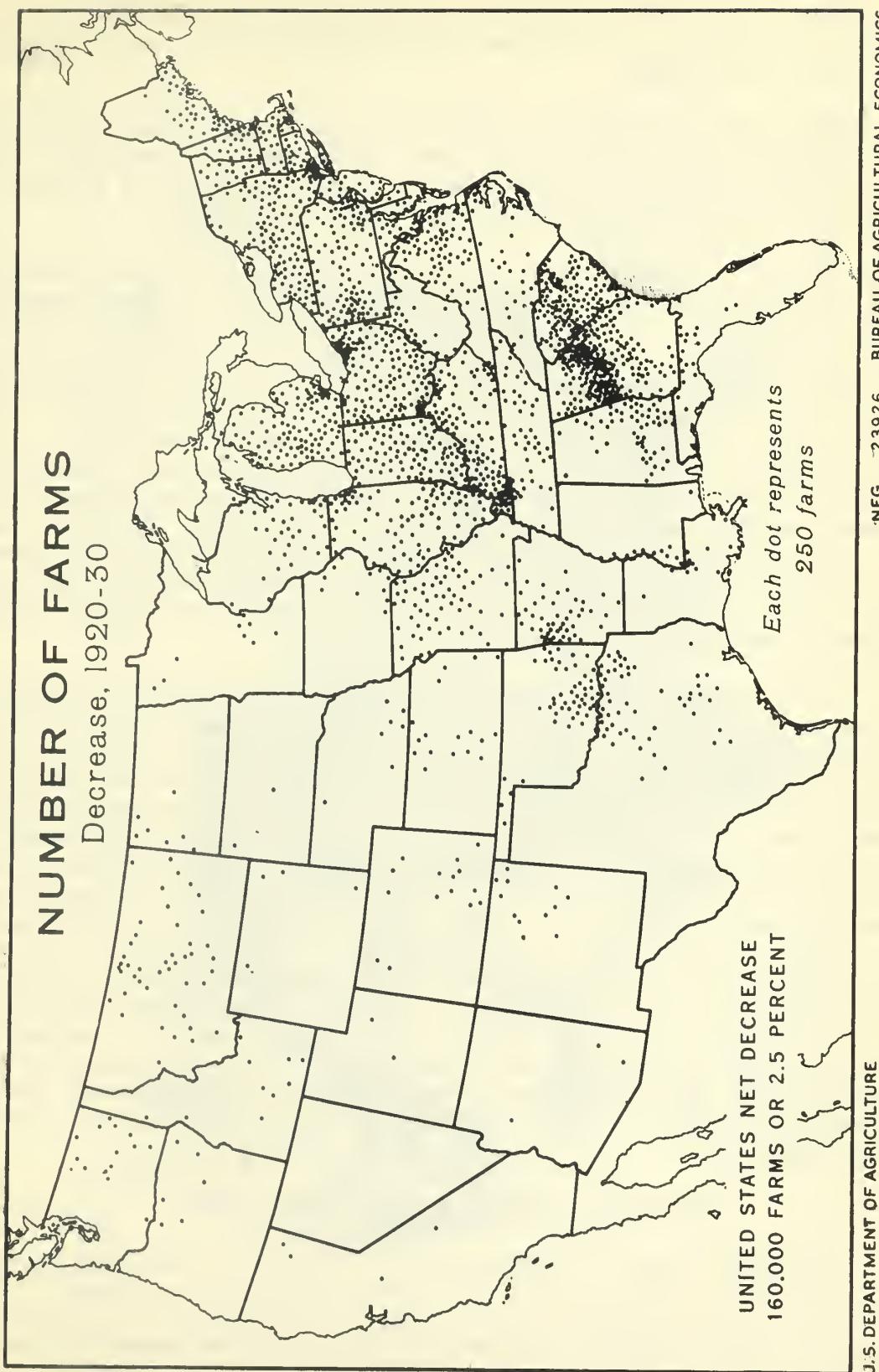
large sections of the country. Beginning with Virginia and Pennsylvania on the east and running west and southwest through West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, southern Illinois, Missouri, Arkansas, southeastern Oklahoma and northeastern Texas, there is a large area of heavy out-migration. Through central Georgia, running into South Carolina on the northeast and Alabama on the west is another such area. A third begins in central Montana, covers a large portion of southern Idaho, goes south into Utah, and northward into eastern Oregon and Washington. A fourth covers large areas of Colorado and eastern New Mexico. Still another is in northern Michigan; and in addition to these, there are spotted areas which cover only relatively small geographic regions.

These areas of marked population dispersion do not follow exclusively either low- or high-income areas, either good- or bad-land areas; or type-farming areas. Therefore no one of these is a common base to the areas of heavy out-migration, and while such so-called bad-land areas as the Appalachian-Ozark mountain region and the Cut-Over region of the Lake States do appear in secondary areas of out-migration, none of them is heavily represented in the primary areas (those marked in solid black on the map), and within a given number of States out-migration was more marked from the better than the poorer land sections of these States. For example, it should be pointed out that the Appalachian mountain region, although an area of poor land, self-sufficient farming, and high birth rates, was not during this period one of the areas of heaviest out-migration.

It will be noted, however, that there are regions that have shown up pretty consistently as dark spots on the maps presented in other chapters which also appear as heavy migration areas. They are the Ozark mountain region and certain sections of the Cotton Belt - one section in the eastern and one in the western Cotton Belt.

When the areas of most marked out-migration are considered (those that appear in solid black in Figure 21) it will be seen that there are only a relatively few areas in which migration during the decade was equal to 30 percent of the 1920 population. The largest of these areas appears in north central Georgia, the second largest in northwestern Arkansas and eastern Oklahoma, another in central Montana, and still another in Colorado and New Mexico. No one of these during the decade suffered any outstanding drought or other catastrophe and no one of them, except the Ozark mountain section, is a bad-land area. It was, therefore, the relatively prosperous agricultural areas that were losing population most heavily during the decade.

In an area like the Appalachian mountains where the birth rate is exceptionally high, the black spots on the map indicating relatively great migration, may not indicate an absolute loss in population. As a matter of fact, because of the excessive birth rate, there may have been excessive migration and yet an absolute increase in the population during



the decade. The same is true for the Ozark section, the heaviest migration from Arkansas and Oklahoma being from the mountain sections where the birth rate was high.

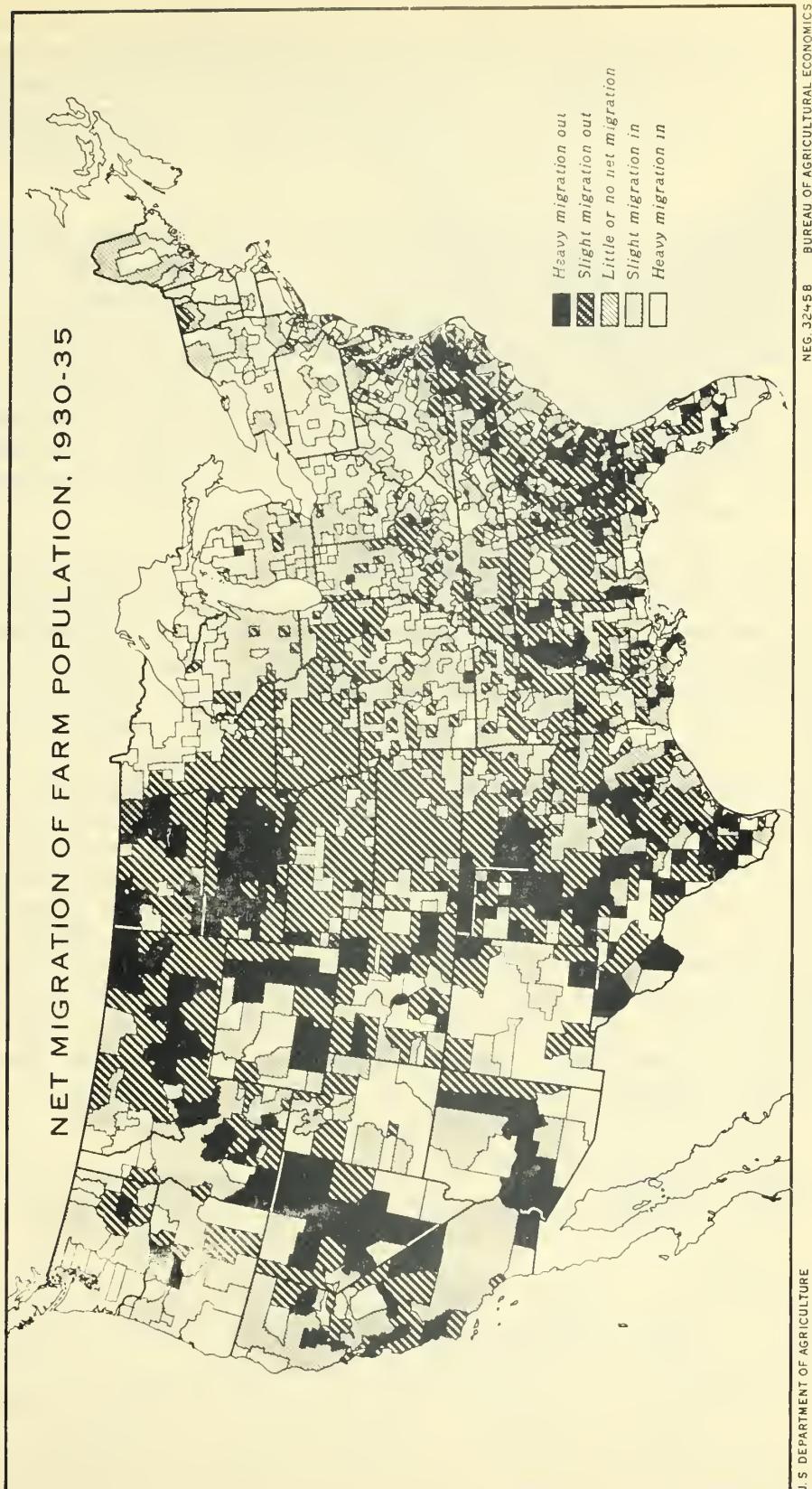
The Lake States Cut-Over region is also represented during this decade by considerable out-migration. Here again, this is true only if the second interval on the map is included, for only 3 counties of Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan appear in solid black on the map.

All other areas of heavy migration are from relatively good-land areas. In the Cotton Belt, both in Georgia and in the Black Lands of Texas and Oklahoma, in central Montana, in parts of Colorado, and in practically all other areas of marked migration, people were moving out of relatively good farming areas. The Michigan area is one of relatively intensive agriculture, potato, sugar-beet, and dairy production. The bluegrass area of Kentucky and Tennessee, the Piedmont section of Virginia and South Carolina, the better corn-producing areas of Missouri, the Delta of Mississippi, and river basins of Washington, Idaho, Utah, Colorado, and New Mexico were all areas of out-migration. A number, however, are areas of great farm population density and high birth rates, but no one of them, (except Utah, parts of the Appalachian-Ozark mountain section, and the eastern Cotton Belt) is an area of the highest rural population density for the country.

It is apparent that during this decade there was a distinct correlation between the loss of farm population and commercialization of agriculture. Mechanization was moving at a rapid pace with its concomitant decline in number of workers needed, and farms were decreasing in number in some of the best land areas through consolidation of holdings. A comparison of Figure 21 and Figure 22 makes quickly apparent the truth of this statement. There was a net decrease of 160,000 farms during the decade, and while a number of areas were included in those of decreasing farms which were not areas of heavy out-migration, practically every region of heavy out-migration was one of decreasing farms. This was true of areas lying both east and west of the Appalachian mountain region, of the bluegrass area of Kentucky and Tennessee, of the eastern section of the Cotton Belt, of the Black Lands of Oklahoma and Texas, of the dairy, potato and sugar-beet sections of Michigan, of the corn-producing section of Missouri, of the areas of heaviest population loss in Montana, Idaho, and Washington, and in the areas of marked population decrease in Colorado and New Mexico.

Migration to and from Farms, 1930 to 1935

Migration trends were considerably different in some sections of the Nation between 1930 and 1935 from those of the previous decade. The urbanward migration reversed itself during the depression, and in addition to the fact that the natural increase in farm population ceased to flow to the cities, there was during the year 1932 an actual net migration from urban to rural places. Some regions that had heavy out-migration during



the 20's continued to lose population during the next 5 years, but others that had had out-migration during the 20's actually had in-migration between 1930 and 1935. 104/ A study of these various areas reveals some interesting facts, especially in relation to the apparent tendency for population to pile up in bad-land areas during a severe industrial depression.

There is considerable evidence that such factors as depression and drought, especially in their early stages, accelerate migration tendencies which operate rather consistently to adjust the farm population to its land opportunities. Even during periods of relative prosperity, there is an apparent tendency for farm population to withdraw from areas of relatively low opportunity and to re-move to areas of relatively high opportunity. 105/ Under normal conditions, it may therefore be assumed that heavy out-migration from given agricultural areas is an index to a belief on the part of the migrants that they could remain in such areas only at a disadvantage to themselves.

Figure 23 shows that population increased rapidly in the Appalachian mountains and the Lake States Cut-Over between 1930 and 1935, and that some regions in Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, and southern Illinois and Missouri, which had been areas of out-migration during the 20's were areas of in-migration in the 5 years following 1930. The natural increase - that is, excess of births over deaths - accounts for considerable of the increase in population during this period, but there was apparently some in-migration also. The explanation is presumably that the industrial depression eliminated alternative opportunities for economic employment, and a certain percentage of the population born and reared in the regions which in accordance with previous trends would have moved to industrial centers now remained in the areas. Certain others who had left the regions of heavy population and high birth rate during previous decades, returned to the areas from which they had moved and settled upon land that, although poor and abandoned, did offer opportunity for squatting without protest from owners. In a great many cases, these in-migrants were sons and daughters of farmers who had never left the region. Apparently they sought the shelter of the land, even though it was poor land, in order to escape unemployment and bread lines in the cities.

Figure 24 shows where the great mass of persons not living on farms in 1930 were on January 1, 1935. A study of this figure shows that

104/ Figure 21 and Figure 23 are based on data which are not exactly comparable. Figure 21 represents migration of rural population and Figure 23 represents migration of farm population.

105/ Goodrich, et al., Internal Migration and Economic Opportunity, Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, November 1936, p. 263; Wilson, H. F., The Hill Country of Northern New England, Its Social and Economic History, 1790 - 1930, Columbia Univ. Press. N. Y., 1936.

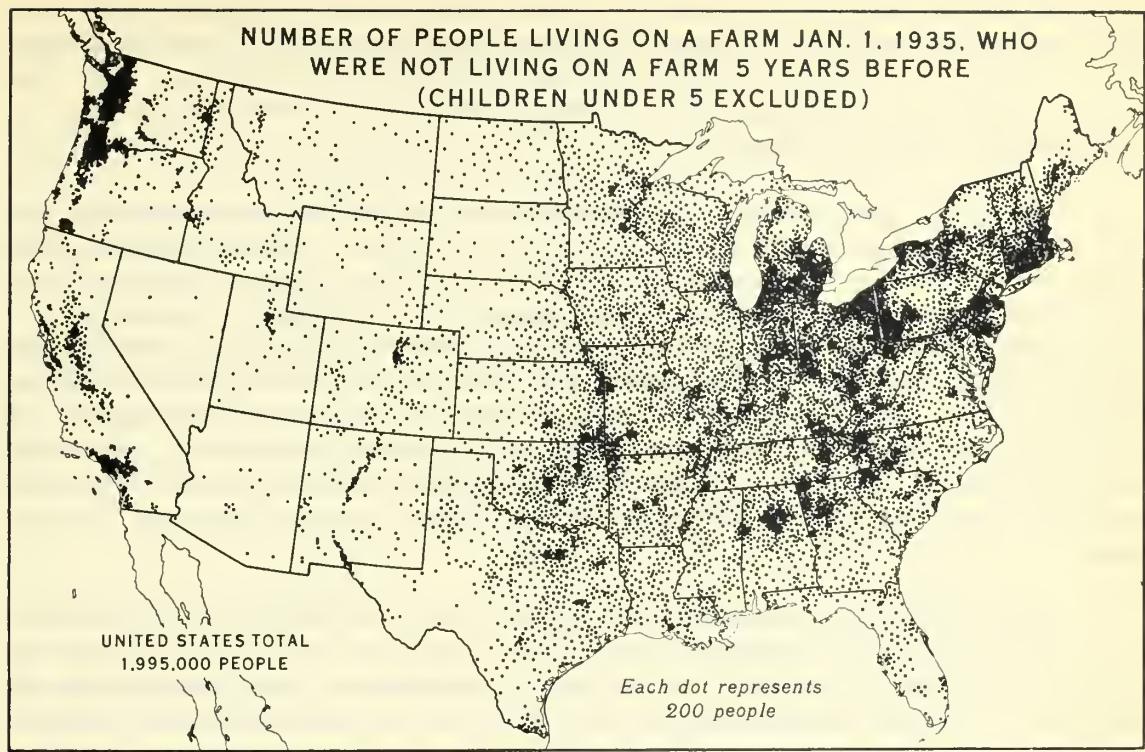


FIG. 24

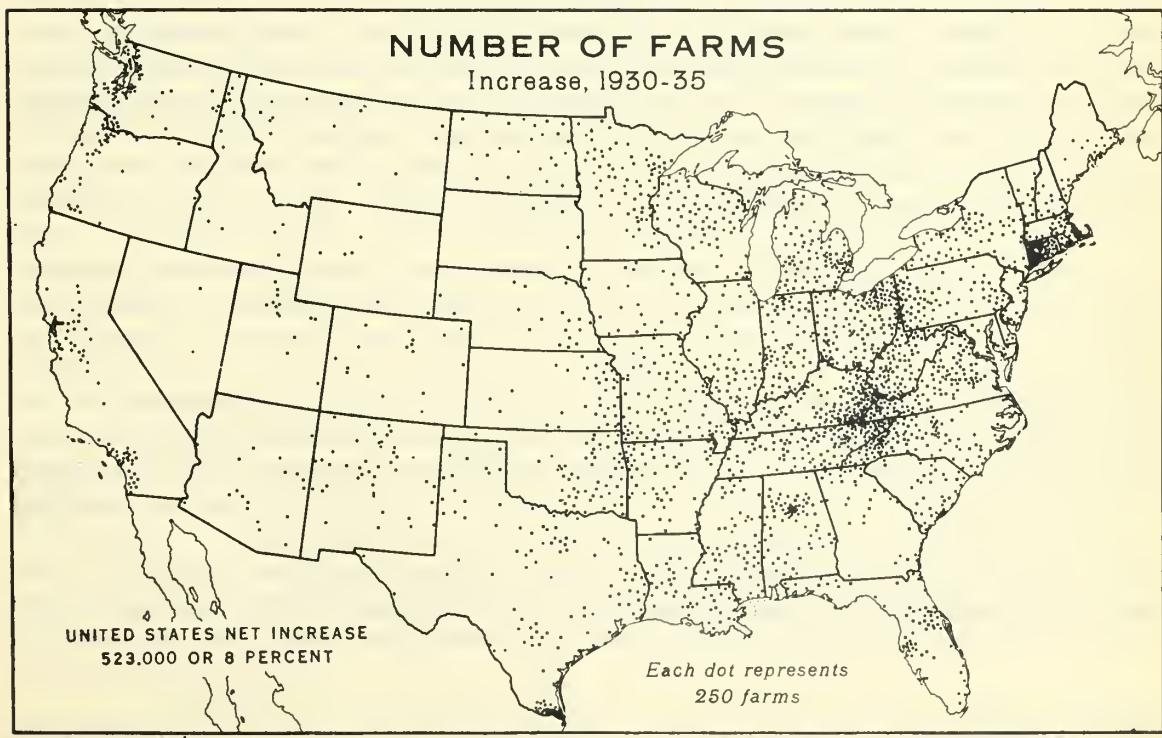


FIG. 25

they had moved back to the farm in great numbers in the Appalachian and Ozark mountain regions. Figure 25 shows that there was a great increase in the number of farms in these regions during this 5-year period. The same thing, to a less marked extent, happened in Utah, New Mexico, and the Lake States Cut-Over areas.

In all other areas of marked outward migration between 1920 and 1930, there was continued out-migration after 1930. This was especially true of the area in the eastern Cotton Belt and the State of Montana, and to a considerable extent true in the western Cotton Belt. In addition, practically the whole Great Plains suffered heavy out-migration during the period 1930 to 1935. In this case, the cause was a series of devastating droughts. In the case of the Cotton Belt, it was the continuation of out-migration which has been going on for a number of decades, resulting chiefly from a high natural increase in population and an almost universally low standard of living among the lower tenure groups of the region.

Data from all studies from which the foregoing generalizations were drawn serve to indicate that farm migration is stimulated by an attempt to escape from what the migrant considers to be a disadvantaging condition in relation to what he believes to be his alternative opportunities. The land opportunities which presented themselves during our long period of pioneering caused an almost ceaseless migration westward for approximately 100 years. During this century of time, persons seeking their highest opportunities in agriculture apparently were convinced that these opportunities lay in areas farther west than those in which they were born. The results were that population in each newly settled area increased by immigration for about three decades following the initial settlement, and that the older settled areas lost population during the periods in which the new areas were being occupied. In the minds of the people who migrated during this period, the older settled areas offered comparative advantages considerably below the new land areas.

During the period of industrial expansion, population was naturally attracted from farms to the areas that were being most rapidly industrialized, primarily the north Atlantic and Lake States, or as Thornthwaite says, "the most significant migration trend in the decade, (1920-1930), is the movement from the country and the concentration of population in and around the large urban agglomerations." 106/ This migration had been evident in the preceding decade, and had begun as early as 1890. Spengler, in his synoptic study of "Internal Migration and Social Policy" draws, among other conclusions, the following: "In general, native white migrants tend to move from States where the levels of per capita income and of economic conditions of the population are relatively lower to States where the corresponding levels are relatively higher . . .

106/ Thornthwaite, C. Warren, Internal Migration in the United States, Study of Population Redistribution Series, Univ. of Pa. Press, Philadelphia, Pa., 1934.

.....native white migrants have tended to some extent to move from places of relatively less to places of relatively more economic security." 107/

In the back-to-the-land movement during the depression, even though much of the movement was into poor land areas, there is reason to believe that the migrants, if not seeking security, were at least attempting to escape the insecurity or disadvantaging conditions of other areas, mainly industrial.

Spengler, 108/ in attempting to reach some broad but trustworthy generalizations, says that, "Migration during the prosperous twenties tended on the balance to improve the economic condition of the migrants. Ten southeastern States marked by relatively lower levels of living, gave up 1,700,000 peopleFor the country as a whole, 'the poorest subsistence farming areas' lost relatively the largest number of migrants; the regions of 'more profitable agriculture' lost relatively the fewest. Of the 80 counties with relief percentages of 30 or more, 70 'were areas from which redundant population was being drained away during the twenties.' In 1922-30, the poorest one-fourth of the middle western agricultural counties lost about $2\frac{1}{2}$ times as large a percentage of their population as did the wealthiest one-fourth." He believes that his data "suggest that the composition of the immigrant stream is culturally below that of the resident population;" that is, it is the culturally disadvantaged who migrate.

Conclusions

According to the general thesis of this chapter, areas of heavy out-migration should correlate rather perfectly with areas marked by other disadvantaging factors. This is true to some extent, but not entirely true, for while areas of low income have contributed most heavily to the stream of migrants from farms, some areas of high income are also contributors, and while heavily tenanted areas have also been marked by great out-migration, other areas in which tenancy is comparatively low have been contributors. It has been noted that poor land areas have not tended to depopulate themselves to the extent that it is probably desirable.

Areas of heavy farm labor are the very areas to which migrants, particularly transient laborers, flow in greatest numbers, and therefore the correlation is between farm-labor areas and in-migration rather than out-migration.

Between 1930 and 1935, there was a high correlation between migrative areas and relief areas for the obvious reason that drought, which created a great need for relief, has also been one of the chief causes of migration.

107/ Spengler, Joseph J., Migration within the United States, reprint from The Journal of Heredity, Vol. 27, No. 1, Jan. 1936., p. 10.

108/ Ibid.

Chapter VI

FARM FAMILIES ON RELIEF AND REHABILITATION

Number and General Conditions

Until the crash of some seven years ago, "farmers on relief" was an anomaly in American rural life. When farmers had suffered depressions, as in 1873 and 1893, they had absorbed their own misery, generally without outside aid, and never with public relief. A momentous thing, therefore, had happened when by February 1935 more than a million farm families were on the Federal relief or rehabilitation rolls. 109/

The explanation of this outstanding phenomenon is not to be found solely in the fact that a Federal relief program, blanketing all sections and classes of the Nation in distress, had come into existence. It was partly due to a situation that prevailed in agriculture, and that had not been duplicated at any previous period of our history. In 1873, the westward migration was still on and self-sufficient farming to a considerable degree prevailed in most sections of the country. In 1893, the cityward movement had begun, and although self-sufficient farming had declined to a great extent, there was not in the national farm population any great number of farm-tenant and farm-labor families, nor had the impact of soil depletion and so-called poor lands begun to affect, to any great extent, the earning capacity and standard of living of rural families. When the depression of the early 1930's struck, it found agriculture operating on a highly mechanized and commercialized basis in wide areas, with the destiny of hundreds of thousands of farmers tied in with the necessity for cash purchasing power. During the economic depression, drought conditions also developed over wide geographic areas, reducing otherwise well-to-do farmers to the verge of poverty.

Society at large in the United States has not been cognizant of the existence in the agricultural population of those who live constantly near the borderline of pauperism. There have, however, always been many poor people in American agriculture. As the depression came on and deepened, more and more of these borderline families fell below the poverty line, and hundreds of thousands who had never imagined that they would need outside assistance found themselves helpless in the face of events over which they had no control. Furthermore, it should be kept in mind that rural people are slow to ask for relief, and undoubtedly hundreds of thousands of farm families who were in real distress have not been on relief rolls at all during the depression.

109/ Asch, Berta, and Mangus, A. R., Farmers on Relief and Rehabilitation, Res. Mono. VIII, Works Progress Administration, Washington, D. C., 1937, p. 6. (This figure of 1,000,000 includes farm laborers.)

For the purposes of this report, it is assumed that those geographic areas in which a relatively high percentage of the farm population has found it necessary to accept relief are areas that are either temporarily or more or less permanently of a disadvantaging character. There is probably no single index that so clearly reveals where these areas are as does the relative prevalence of need for financial relief. The number of farm families on relief or rehabilitation, stated above as more than 1,000,000 in February 1935, has fluctuated with varying economic and physical conditions and with changes in the administration of relief. The number had dropped to 741,000 by June 1935, when an estimated 537,000 farm operators and laborers were receiving direct relief grants, and about 204,000 families obtained rural rehabilitation loans. 110/ During this period, the number of farm families on relief equalled from 11 to 16 percent of the number of rural-farm families reported in the population in 1930. 111/

For those who were farming on poor land, the depression made the struggle for a living increasingly difficult and brought to light the need for the withdrawal from agriculture of millions of acres of the poorest land. Among the sharecroppers of the South, many families were displaced from farms and left with no available prospects of employment. Farm laborers, one after another, were turned out of jobs to wait through weeks and months of idleness or to start out as transients in search of odd jobs.

At the same time, the rapid decline of farm prices brought ruin to many farmers who not long before had been making substantial progress. Farm mortgages were foreclosed by the thousands, and even when the owner was able to hold on to his land, he found it difficult to make a living. 112/ In many areas, the exigencies of drought and floods made the already serious conditions more trying. Thus, when assistance became available under the Federal Emergency Relief Program, it was only natural that many farmers were among the recipients.

The farm relief load was not distributed evenly over the different States, or even from county to county within a State. Although this cannot be shown directly and separately for farm families, it is indicated to a considerable degree by the data for all families on general relief in June 1935.

110/ Ibid., pp. 4-5.

111/ The reader should keep in mind that these figures represent only farm families on relief rolls and do not include the many thousands who have been assisted by such programs as the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, Civilian Conservation Corps, and National Youth Administration.

112/ Murray, W. G., and Brown, W. O., Farm Land and Debt Situation in Iowa, 1935, Bull. No. 328, Iowa Agr. Exp. Sta. Ames, Iowa, 1935; Murray, W. G., and Bitting, H. W., Corporate-Owned Lands in Iowa, 1937, Bull. No. 362, Agr. Exp. Sta., Ames, Iowa, June 1937.

It will undoubtedly be of interest to the reader to know what sort of people these farm families are who have been on relief rolls and what kind of places they call their "homes." There seems to be a prevalent belief on the part of many people in this country that farm families should never have to "go on relief," and that if they do, it naturally follows they must be inefficient, shiftless, and probably not worth helping. According to detailed studies of relief case records made in many parts of the country, this belief in at least the majority of cases is without foundation.

Although there are great variations in the characteristics of farm families on relief throughout the Nation, certain generalizations may safely be made. That these farm people are not transient and unstable is clearly indicated by the long period of residence in the county from which they received financial or other assistance. In one representative Wisconsin county, it was found that over half of the farm owners on relief had lived on the same farm for more than 20 years. 113/ In a study of 273,773 rural farm families in Alabama, it was found that for the open-country families, who comprised 85 percent of the total, the average length of residence in the open country was 38 years, and the length of continuous residence in the county, 29 years. 114/

Relief clients in the farm population are not primarily young, unattached individuals, but are predominantly men and women, with children or aged people dependent upon them. The typical farm family on relief consists of a middle-aged husband, wife, and 3 or 4 children. The typical farm-laborer head of a relief or rehabilitation household is somewhat younger and has probably 2 or 3 children for whom he is the sole support. Most of these heads of households are highly employable, but they have been driven to the relief rolls because of little or no cash income, over-expansion of credit, mounting mortgage indebtedness, poor soil and small farms, prevailing low farm prices, unfavorable or disastrous weather conditions, and pronounced fluctuation in periods of employment, with long intervals of unemployment. In many areas of the country, they are suffering from conditions that are beyond their control and the rolls contain owners as well as tenants, croppers, and laborers.

If we include data from studies which have been made concerning relief households from the inception of the rural relief program in 1933, we find that some of the same characteristics have been apparent throughout the depression. It may probably be assumed, then, that these persistent factors are fundamental to the presence of certain types of families on relief rolls. Briefly these characteristics may be summarized by saying that rural families on relief tend to be larger than those not

113/ Shafer, Carol L., These Country People on Relief, Survey Graphic, Vol. 25, No. 9., Sept. 1936.

114/ Hoff Sommer, Harold, The Disadvantaged Farm Family in Alabama, Rural Soc. Journal, Vol. 2, No. 4, December 1937, pp. 383-4.

on relief rolls or those in the general population. They operate smaller acreages than non-relief families. The heads of relief households have less formal education than non-relief heads. That tenure status was a factor as well as size of farms and education is indicated by the fact that there have been more tenants than owners on relief rolls. 115/

Thousands of farm-relief families live in the same houses they were occupying before the depression and these houses indicate the conditions under which they lived in so-called normal times. The houses are below the standards of American decency, barely offering shelter, and totally devoid of such conveniences as radios, telephones, electric lights, and water piped to the dwelling. As one writer has expressed it, "They live in tumbledown shanties, many of them without even windows they bathe in a little tin washpan, without privacy, towels or soap they eat with their fingers because they have no forks they never saw a mattress until the Government gave them one, sleeping three or four in a bed on straw-filled ticks, or else rolled in a ragged quilt on the floor they wear dirty clothes because they have none into which they can change they drink branch water charged with typhoid because there is none able, or willing, to buy them a well bucket." 116/

In "Six Rural Problem Areas" studied in 1934, it was found that at the time of the 1930 Census, fewer than 4 percent of the farmers in the Appalachian-Ozark region had electric lights, less than 2 percent had bathrooms, and less than 8 percent had telephones. The Eastern Cotton Belt was lowest in all items, with 2 percent or fewer farms reporting radio, electric lights, or water piped to the house, and fewer than 5 percent of the farms having telephones. Every one of the problem areas was below the United States average in the possession of electric-lighting facilities. 117/

Rehabilitation families were in every instance taken from relief rolls, and although they were carefully selected, and therefore above the average of all farm families on relief, their general characteristics were not different. In a recent study of rehabilitation clients in Arkansas, it was found that the households were different from the average in that they had few old people but relatively large numbers of children. The houses were small even when the families were large. Overcrowding was most marked in the Northwest Ozark area where there were 2.5 persons

115/ McCormick, Thos. C., Comparative Study of Rural Relief and Non-Relief Households, Res. Mono. II, Works Progress Administration, Washington, D. C., 1935; Asch, Berta, and Mangus, A. R., op. cit.

116/ Davis, Lillian Perrine, Relief and the Sharecropper, Survey Graphic, Vol. 25, No. 1, Jan. 1936.

117/ Beck, P. G., and Forster, M. C., Six Rural Problem Areas, Relief-Resources-Rehabilitation, Res. Mono. I, Federal Emergency Relief Administration, Washington, D. C., 1935, pp. 89-90.

per room. Eighty-five percent of the 19,000 clients studied who were accepted for the rehabilitation program were in debt, the average indebtedness being \$159 before going on the rehabilitation rolls. They were, in general, young farmers with large families who, during drought and depression, had used up their resources so that they could no longer farm efficiently. They were not habitual dependents, but needed live-stock, farming equipment, and funds to discharge existing obligations. 118/

Areas of Concentration

Relief has been necessary in every section of the Nation, but there has been more need in some sections than in others. The ratio of persons receiving relief in June 1935 to the total population (Census 1930) is highest in four distinct areas: the Appalachian-Ozark Highlands from central Pennsylvania through West Virginia, Kentucky, North Carolina, Tennessee and southern Missouri to Arkansas and eastern Oklahoma; the Cut-Over sections of the Great Lakes States; the Dakotas and eastern Montana, in the Northern Great Plains; and the smaller concentrations in New Mexico, Colorado, and Arizona, in the Southern Great Plains.

Although the data from which Figure 26 is constructed include both rural and urban relief, all of these areas are rural rather than urban in their general characteristics. It may be safely assumed therefore that farmers represent a considerable proportion of the total relief load in the counties that appear black on the map. Further evidence that the areas of general relief and farm relief are at least roughly coincident is indicated by a special study of farmers on relief and rehabilitation in 138 selected counties of the United States. 119/

Appalachian-Ozark Region

The region of the Appalachian Highlands contains large areas in which a high percentage of farm families live constantly on low material standards of living, and although it is the outstanding area of the whole United States in self-sufficient farming, as measured by the Census definition, 120/ the fact is that the average farm family within the

118/ Wilson, W. T., and Metzler, W. H., Characteristics of Arkansas Rehabilitation Clients, Bull. No. 348, Univ. of Ark., Fayetteville, Ark., June 1937.

119/ See Table 5 for percentages of farmers on relief and rehabilitation by regions or areas of the country. The data are taken from Asch, Berta, and Mangus, A. R., op. cit., and are based on a sample study of these areas. See Appendix B.

120/ The Census definition of self-sufficiency is: "where the value of the farm products used by the family was 50 percent or more of the total value of all products of the farm."

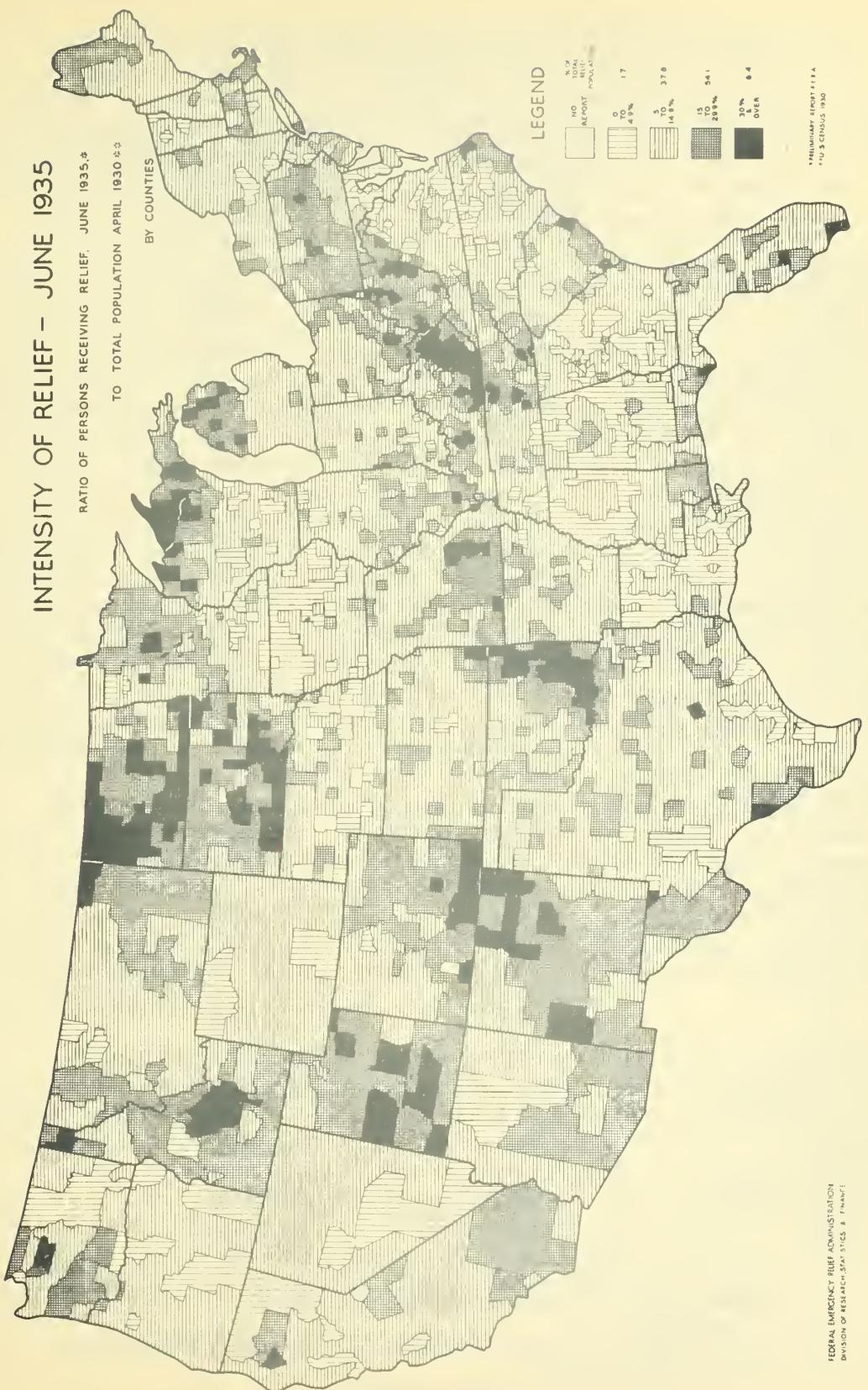


TABLE 5. RATIO OF FARM OPERATORS ^{1/} RECEIVING RELIEF GRANTS IN JUNE 1935 AND OF FARM OPERATORS RECEIVING RELIEF GRANTS OR REHABILITATION ADVANCES IN JUNE 1935 TO ALL FARM OPERATORS IN JANUARY 1935

Area and tenure	:	Percent of all farm operators on relief	:	Percent of all farm operators on relief or rehabilitation ^{2/}
	:	June 1935	:	June 1935
All areas:				
Farm operators		5.4		8.8
Owners		3.5		5.4
Tenants ^{3/}		8.2		12.2
Croppers		5.3		14.3
Eastern cotton:				
Farm operators		2.3		7.6
Owners		1.4		5.0
Tenants		1.9		8.6
Croppers		3.6		9.3
Western cotton:				
Farm operators		5.5		9.3
Owners		1.7		3.1
Tenants		6.4		11.1
Croppers		11.2		17.8
Appalachian-Ozark:				
Farm operators		12.1		13.4
Owners		7.1		8.0
Tenants		22.8		25.2
Lake States Cut-Over:				
Farm operators		10.7		18.4
Owners		9.9		17.6
Tenants		15.4		22.8
Hay and dairy:				
Farm operators		2.8		4.9
Owners		1.7		3.2
Tenants		7.0		11.6
Corn Belt:				
Farm operators		2.8		4.7
Owners		1.3		2.0
Tenants		4.5		7.9
Spring wheat:				
Farm operators		20.0		28.2
Owners		13.3		17.9
Tenants		31.0		45.3
Winter wheat:				
Farm operators		6.2		9.7
Owners		2.6		4.3
Tenants		10.0		15.6
Ranching:				
Farm operators		6.1		8.1
Owners		4.9		6.1
Tenants		9.9		14.3

This table appears on p. 51, Asch and Mangus, op. cit.

^{1/} By usual occupation.

^{2/} Unduplicated. Cases that receive both relief and rehabilitation were considered rehabilitation cases.

^{3/} Exclusive of croppers in the 2 Cotton Areas.

area produces not only a relatively small quantity of farm commodities for the market, but also a relatively small quantity for home consumption. Furthermore, it is an area of high birth rates and poor lands, with the result that there is, and for a long time has been, a tendency for the population to exceed the capacity of the natural resources to furnish adequate support for the people who live there.

For some time preceding the depression, however, two factors tended to alleviate this situation. One was the presence of supplementary enterprises - primarily lumbering and mining - which furnished some cash income to farm families. The other was the fact that there was a constant out-migration of people who left the area to settle elsewhere in agriculture or to enter industrial pursuits. In some sections these supplementary industries had been gradually diminishing for several decades, and with the advent of depression a number of them practically collapsed. This forced many families into full-time agriculture who previously had been only part-time farmers, and even forced a number of families into agriculture who, previous to the depression, had been fully employed in mining and lumbering. At the same time, depression in the areas to which persons had migrated and the occupations to which they shifted also lost their capacity to furnish employment, and many persons who were born and reared in this area, but who had moved elsewhere, returned. In the tide of migration from towns and cities to rural areas, which took place between 1930 and 1935, this was one of the heaviest receiving areas. There thus resulted an excessive population pressure which served to accentuate the need for relief.

Relief was excessively high in the whole Appalachian-Ozark region, where 13.4 percent of all farm operators were receiving Federal relief or rehabilitation as of June 1935 (Fig. 26). Farm tenant families had to apply for relief in greater relative numbers than did owner operators. Only 7 percent of the farm owners, compared with 23 percent of the tenants, were on relief at this period. 121/ Approximately the same comparison between these two groups prevailed in relation to the rural rehabilitation program.

A number of factors contribute to the poverty conditions that prevail in this area. It is an area of poor land and small farms. For this reason, even though the area is known as one of self-sufficient farming, the agricultural base upon which the average family operated was not sufficient to absorb the burden thrown upon it by the loss of supplementary income and the additional population that migrated to the area. The average number of acres operated by all owners of the region was 83 and those by the tenants, 56. The average number of acres operated by

121/ Asch and Mangus, op. cit., p. 51. (See Table 16.)

owners who were on relief in June 1935, however, was only 34, and the average number of acres operated by tenants was only 21. 122/ It is therefore apparent that the families living on the small farms of the area contributed most heavily to the relief rolls. Furthermore, farm families on relief in this area were larger than those of the general farm population of the Nation as a whole. Farm-owner families on relief in the Appalachian-Ozark area averaged 5.9 persons per household, whereas the average size of all rural-farm households for the Nation is 4.6.

The in-flow of migration contributed to the burdens of the region, but the failure of supplementary industries and the cessation of out-migration were the new factors operating here. As a matter of fact, only 7 percent of the farm operators on relief had moved into these counties since 1929, and the number of migrating families from other States since 1929 was only 1 percent. Seventy-five percent of those on relief had lived in the county of their residence since birth. 123/ It was therefore not in-migration which contributed chiefly to the distress.

The impact of loss of earnings in supplementary industries is indicated by the fact that 27 percent of those who before the depression were employed in nonagricultural enterprises, now devoted full time to farming. 124/ Furthermore, the majority of farm-laborer heads of households (64 percent) were out of work in June 1935, and unemployment conditions resembling closely those of workers in large industrial centers prevailed. 125/.

The Ozark section is similar in many ways to the Appalachian Highlands. For the most part, it is mountainous or hilly, with poor land and many small farms and still less possibility for outside employment. Even though the area was settled from two to five decades later than the Appalachians, its timber resources have been exhausted to about the same extent because they were not so abundant in the beginning.

It is not so large a region as the Appalachian in either geographic extent or number of farm families. It is not so highly self-sufficient, and employment off the farm is more often in non-agricultural pursuits, chiefly mining. Similar to the Appalachian area, it is a region of high birth rates, with a poverty of natural resources; it is an area of relatively few tenants, but of small farms. The high relief rates are therefore primarily due to the heavy burden of population in relation to the natural resources from which the population can draw economic support.

The Lake States Cut-Over Region

The Lake States Cut-Over region covers the northernmost parts of Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota, and like the Appalachian-Ozark

122/ Ibid. p. 63, Table 22.

123/ Ibid. p. 43, Table 14.

124/ Ibid. p. 54.

125/ Ibid. p. 121.

region, although not to the same extent, is inhabited by a good many self-sufficient and part-time farmers. It is an area of poor land, and was originally settled by persons who found their chief economic opportunity in lumbering and mining. With the gradual exhaustion of timber and mineral resources, many families remained in the area as farmers.

Within the last 20 years, it has suffered from the curse of excessive real estate promotion, a number of families having been led to settle in the area upon the basis of promises that had little possibility of fulfillment. Many families with inadequate funds were still in the process of land-clearing when the depression developed, and they, together with others, were thrown on to relief rolls in great numbers as the depression deepened. In June 1935, when 8.8 percent of all farm operators of the Nation were on relief or rehabilitation, 18.4 percent within this region were receiving assistance from one or the other of these two sources. 126/

This whole area was first occupied by white settlers a number of decades after other portions of the three States had been settled. Only 11 percent of the farm operators on relief in the area in June 1935 had lived in the same county since birth, and 27 percent had moved into the county of present residence during the preceding 10 years; 14 percent had moved in since 1929. 127/ It therefore appears that this area of recent settlement and excess population in relation to the developed natural resources, received during the depression an influx of unemployed industrial workers returning to the land, as well as some drought refugees from the Northern Great Plains.

Those receiving relief within the area were naturally the lower income farmers; they were those living on the smaller farms of the region, as well as some tenants. The combined relief and rehabilitation rates in June 1935 were 17.6 percent for owners and 22.8 percent for tenants. 128/

This area reflects a condition that was malignant for some time preceding the depression. The impact of the depression brought these cumulative, disadvantaging conditions sharply to focus, and relief and rehabilitation rolls reflect the inevitable answer to the maladjustments.

Northern Great Plains

In the northern half of the Great Plains, the necessity for relief in 1935 was most intense in the Dakotas and eastern Montana.

126/ Ibid., p. 51.

127/ Ibid., pp. 43-45 (Tables 14 and 15).

128/ Ibid., p. 51. (Table 16).

In this semi-arid section, the large farms are operated chiefly on a one-crop basis. Population flowed into this area rather late in the westward migration. The particular area under discussion (that appearing in solid black in Figure 26) was only very lightly populated until after 1900. Early settlers carried into the area habits of farming from farther east, which were not well adapted to the soil and climatic conditions of the new area. Consequently, many of the farms were too small for the type of agriculture that was necessary for correct land use and economic success, and large parts of the area which should have been left in grass culture were converted into field-crop use. Therefore, except in the most humid years, agriculture had been precarious from the time of settlement to the coming of the depression. When farm prices collapsed in the early 1930's, and a series of drought years followed, a large percentage of the farming population fell below the level of self-support, and by June 1935, 28.2 percent of all farm operators in the Northern Great Plains, or Spring Wheat area, were on direct relief or receiving rehabilitation loans. 129/

In no other area, unless it be the so-called Dust Bowl, has the whole enterprise of agriculture come nearer collapsing in the last 7 years than here. More than four-fifths of the farm operators receiving relief reported their farms as mortgaged and 79 percent of all farm operators reported chattel mortgages. 130/ In some sections, as high as 6 unpaid annual seed loans had accumulated. Tax delinquencies were widespread and heavy. Local financing collapsed because of the almost universal failure of the banks, and when the drought struck in severe intensity in 1934, it became necessary to liquidate farm livestock in great numbers because of the failure of pastures and the lack of other feed. The drought of 1934 was followed by another in 1936, and the necessity for outside assistance became greater than that represented in Figure 26. 131/

In spite of all of these adversities, most of the farmers have clung to the land although the area has in recent years been one marked by outward migration (Fig. 23, p. 80). In June 1935, 97 percent of the owners and 90 percent of the tenants who were aided were still on farms. 132/ Since 1929, only 5 percent of the total had moved into counties where they were then living and 87 percent had been in continuous residence for 10 or more years. 133/

129/ Ibid., p. 51 (Table 16).

130/ Beck and Forster, op. cit., pp. 128-129.

131/ Ibid.

132/ Asch and Mangus, op. cit., pp. 52-53.

133/ Ibid., p. 44.

The drought and depression affected everyone in the area, but of course most adversely those whose economic resources were marginal. The owners on relief in 1935 had farms less than one-half the size of the average reported for the area in the 1935 Census, and the tenants on relief, while farming acreages about as large as those of owners were on farms about three-fifths the size of the average for tenants in the region. 134/ It was thus a combination of inadequate sized farms, heavy land and chattel mortgages, delinquent taxes, drought and depression, which prostrated the region and made it one of the heaviest areas of relief for the whole Nation.

Southern Great Plains

The area of the Southern Great Plains, which appears in Figure 26 as an area of high relief in June 1935, covers chiefly southeastern Colorado and northeastern New Mexico, but spreads in general throughout the larger portion of Colorado and New Mexico and the southern portion of Arizona. If all kinds of Federal aid are considered (see Fig. 27), the high relief area then includes western Kansas and Oklahoma and northwestern Texas. It is the area which has become most popularly known as the Dust Bowl, and in many of its characteristics is similar to the Northern Great Plains area. That is, it has a one-crop farming system, is subject to drought, was settled by people who brought in types of farming not adjusted to soil and climatic conditions, and a great deal of land has been placed under tillage which should have remained in grass. Like the Northern Great Plains, it is an area of comparatively recent settlement, most of the population having taken up occupancy after 1890.

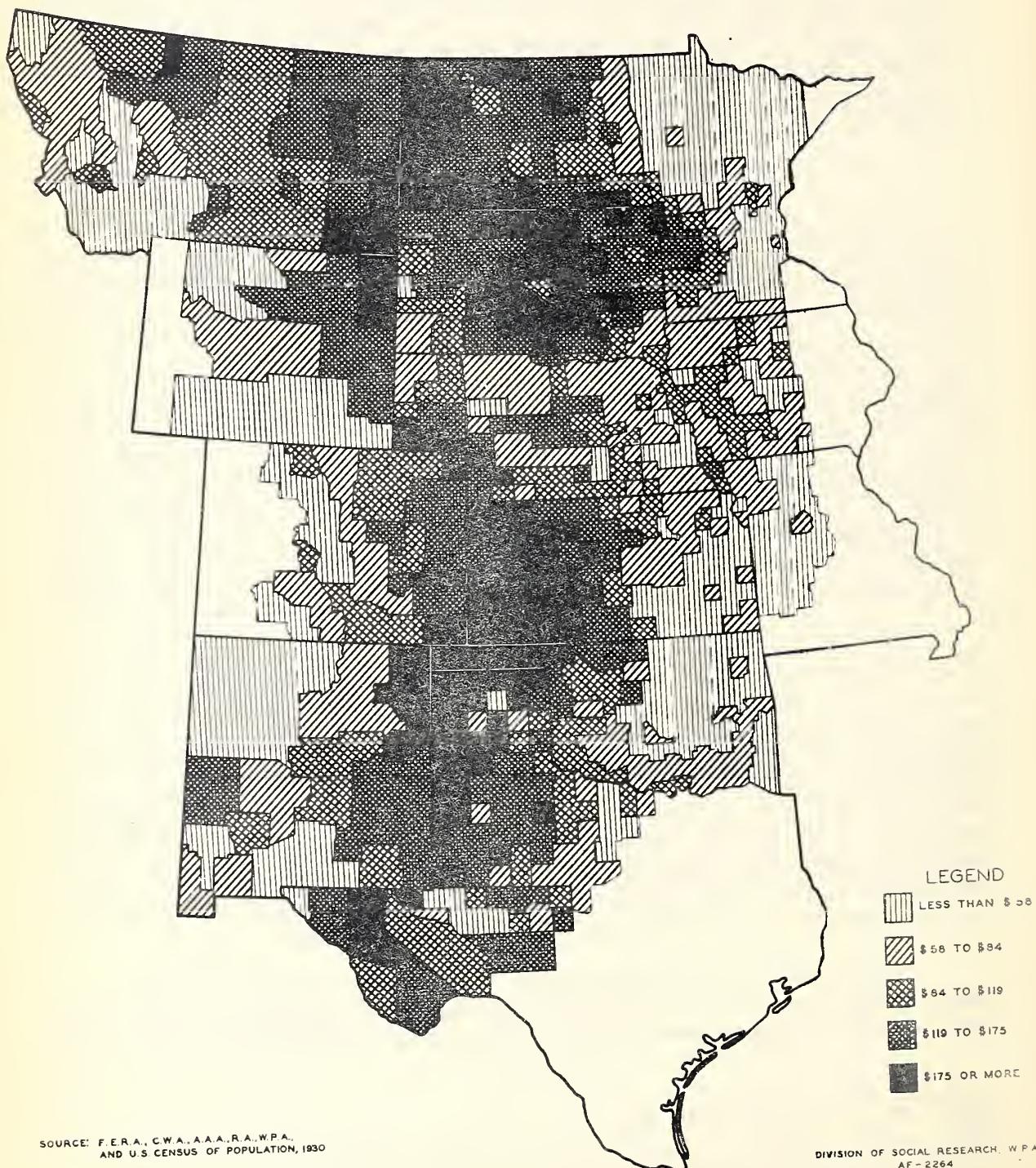
While the Southern Great Plains is not coextensive with the Winter Wheat Belt, and therefore not exactly comparable to it, data are not available on relief conditions in the Southern Great Plains as such. But we may learn something about the extent of mobility among relief households in the Southern Great Plains from existing data on the Winter Wheat Belt. As compared with the Northern Great Plains, this southern area has been one of much greater population mobility. Occupancy has apparently been of more recent origin, a greater proportion of the population having moved into the southern area since 1929 than is true of the northern area. As would be expected, a much smaller percentage of the farmers have lived there for 10 years or more. 135/

Here, as in the Northern Great Plains area, farmers on relatively small farms contributed more than their share of numbers to the relief rolls. Land mortgages were just as numerous as in the northern area, but

134/ Ibid., p. 63 (Table 23).

135/ Malin, James C., The Turnover of Farm Population in Kansas, The Kansas Historical Quarterly, Vol. IV, No. 4, Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, Kans., Nov. 1935, pp. 339-372.

INTENSITY OF FEDERAL AID PER CAPITA
IN GREAT PLAINS DROUGHT AREA
1933 - 1936



chattel mortgages were not so heavy. 136/ Nevertheless, mortgages contributed definitely to the economic collapse when depression and drought came. Tenancy in most sections of the southern area is considerably more prevalent than in the northern area, and since tenants in both areas appeared on relief and rehabilitation rolls in greater percentages than owner operators, this was an added contributive factor in the Southern Great Plains. Furthermore, high winds were far more devastating here. For this reason, this area came to be known as the Dust Bowl and is probably the best known farm-problem area of the Nation.

Utah-Idaho Drought Area

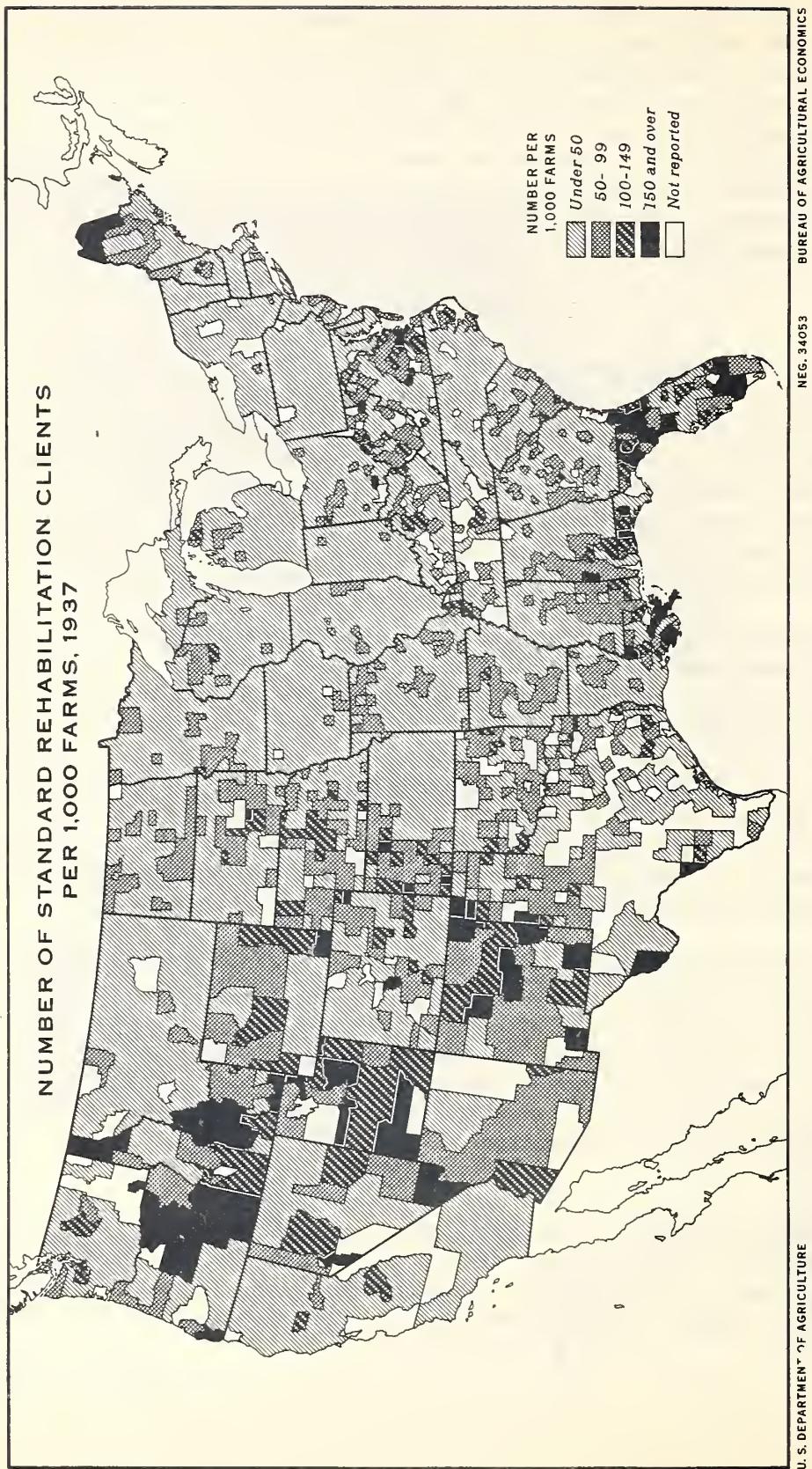
Some sections of the States of Utah and Idaho had exceptionally heavy relief loads in June 1935 (Figure 26). As a matter of fact, the geographic area of these two States in which 30 percent or more of the total population was on relief was greater than that in the Appalachian area, Ozark area, or Lake States Cut-Over area. The combined causes for these otherwise fertile areas being in distress were: (1) pronounced drought conditions, (2) the sharp decline in agricultural prices, and (3) heavy population in ratio to basic natural resources.

These areas are combined dry-farming and irrigation areas. Inadequate snow and rainfall left many of the irrigation reservoirs short of water, and the drought depleted pasture and range land. Cash crops, chiefly small grain and potatoes, and in some sections sheep and wool, are the chief sources of income of farm operators. Inadequate feed supplies for livestock, insufficient water for crop production, and declining agricultural prices prostrated large sections of these two States. Furthermore, in the areas that show black on the map, farm population per square mile is exceedingly dense, and the areas have practically no enterprises other than farming.

A detailed study of Garfield County, Utah, showed 75 percent of all cases on relief in October 1934 as due to drought conditions, and reported that with normal rainfall many families could be removed from the relief rolls during the coming season. It reported that 75 percent of the total population of the county depended upon agriculture, and therefore the physical and economic conditions of agriculture practically dictated the economic condition of the counties. 137/

136/ Beck and Forster, op. cit., pp. 128-129.

137/ Nelson, Lowry, Survey of the Rural Relief Situation in Garfield County, Utah, October 1934. Federal Emergency Relief Administration, December 1, 1934, (typewritten report).



Rural Rehabilitation

With the inception, and during the period of operation, of the Rural Rehabilitation program, there was a winnowing of the great mass of farm families who by 1935 had appeared on relief rolls. Throughout the Nation, there were selected from the farm families on relief those who were adjudged to be capable of gaining permanent footing in agriculture in the localities in which they lived if furnished temporary financial assistance and helpful supervision. The approximately 323,000 farm families 138/ which came to be known as "standard rehabilitation clients" do not include all prospective or hopeful cases for rehabilitation, because funds have never been ample to supply adequate farm operating loans, and because the supervisory forces were not great enough in numbers to make farm and home plans for every family that had some prospect of permanent success in agriculture. But the program did select the best families from those on relief, and Figure 28 therefore reflects those areas in which the greatest number of farm families who had been on relief were considered as not being beyond effective recovery. 139/

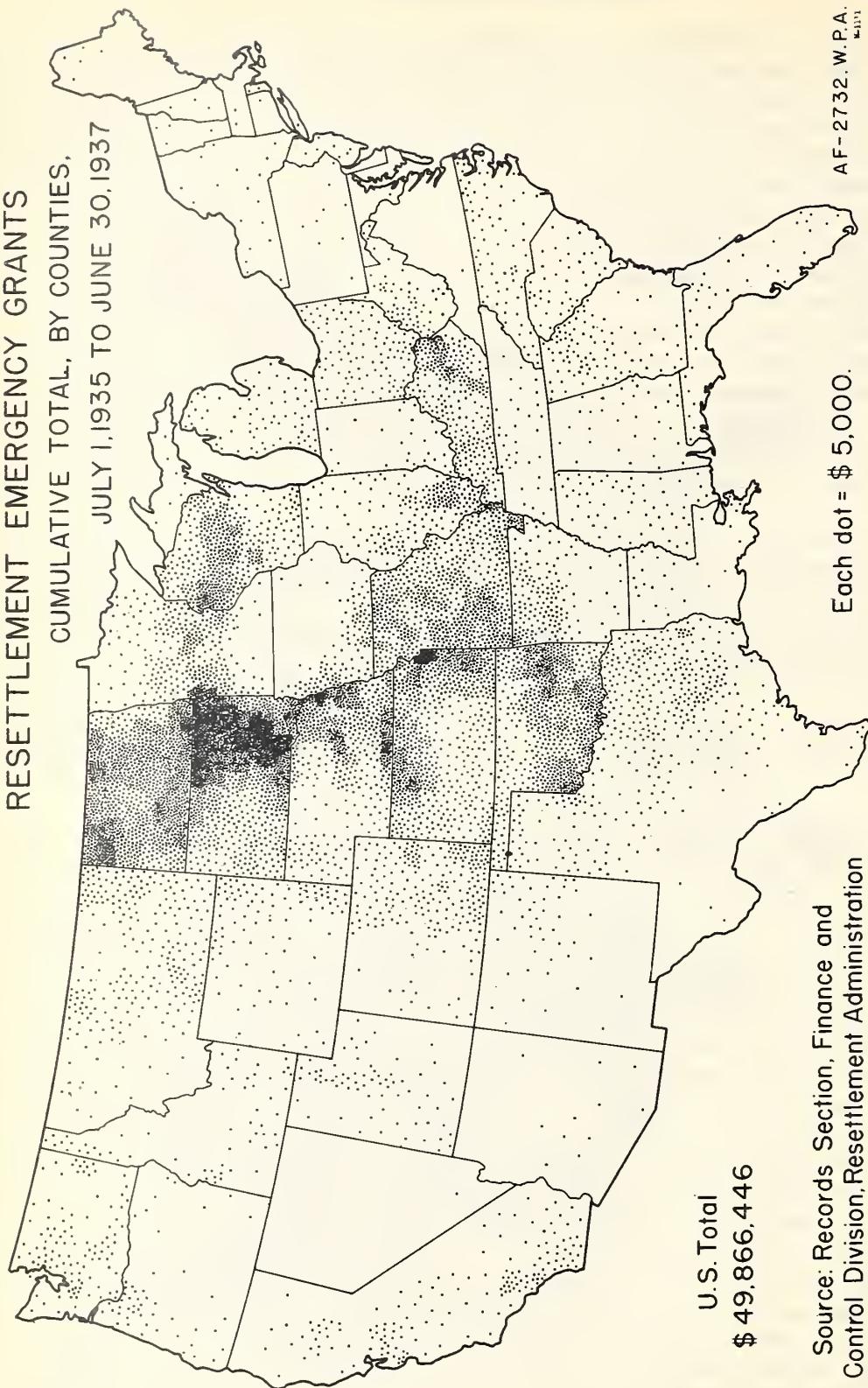
The emergency-grant program of the Resettlement Administration (now the Farm Security Administration) reflects the opposite aspect of the farm-relief situation. Grants were made in cases where droughts or other catastrophes had created physical conditions that made successful farming impossible, for the time being at least.

The emergency-grant cases reflect the most extremely disadvantaging conditions that have prevailed in agriculture since the Federal relief

138/ U. S. Dept. of Agr., Farm Security Admin; Progress Report No. 101, Mar. 10, 1938.

139/ Figure 28 should be interpreted carefully and in the light of the following facts: (1) It depicts the number of standard rehabilitation cases per 1,000 farms and not that percentage of farm families on relief who were considered eligible for rehabilitation loans. The percentage of relief families adjudged capable of recovery was greater in some sections other than those shown in solid black on this map. (2) The Federal relief administration and program had to be set up quickly; therefore the number or percentage of farm families placed on relief may not have reflected in all cases the extent of relief need. (3) Rural rehabilitation families had to be selected from among rural relief families. Any differences, therefore, in local administration, whether the administration was the one which placed the families originally on relief or whether it was the administration that selected given relief families for the rehabilitation program, tend to vitiate the soundness of these data. The reader is therefore not warranted in concluding that the number of standard rural rehabilitation cases per 1,000 farms is a true index to the comparative capacities of the various regions to offer recovery by way of farming. Figure 28 does show where the standard rehabilitation cases were during the year 1937, and with the modifications just described, it does show areas in which it was believed by the Farm Security Administration that a large number of farm families constituted suitable clients for rehabilitation loans.

RESETTLEMENT EMERGENCY GRANTS
CUMULATIVE TOTAL, BY COUNTIES,
JULY 1, 1935 TO JUNE 30, 1937



Source: Records Section, Finance and
Control Division, Resettlement Administration

AF-2732 W.P.A.
1111

FIG. 29

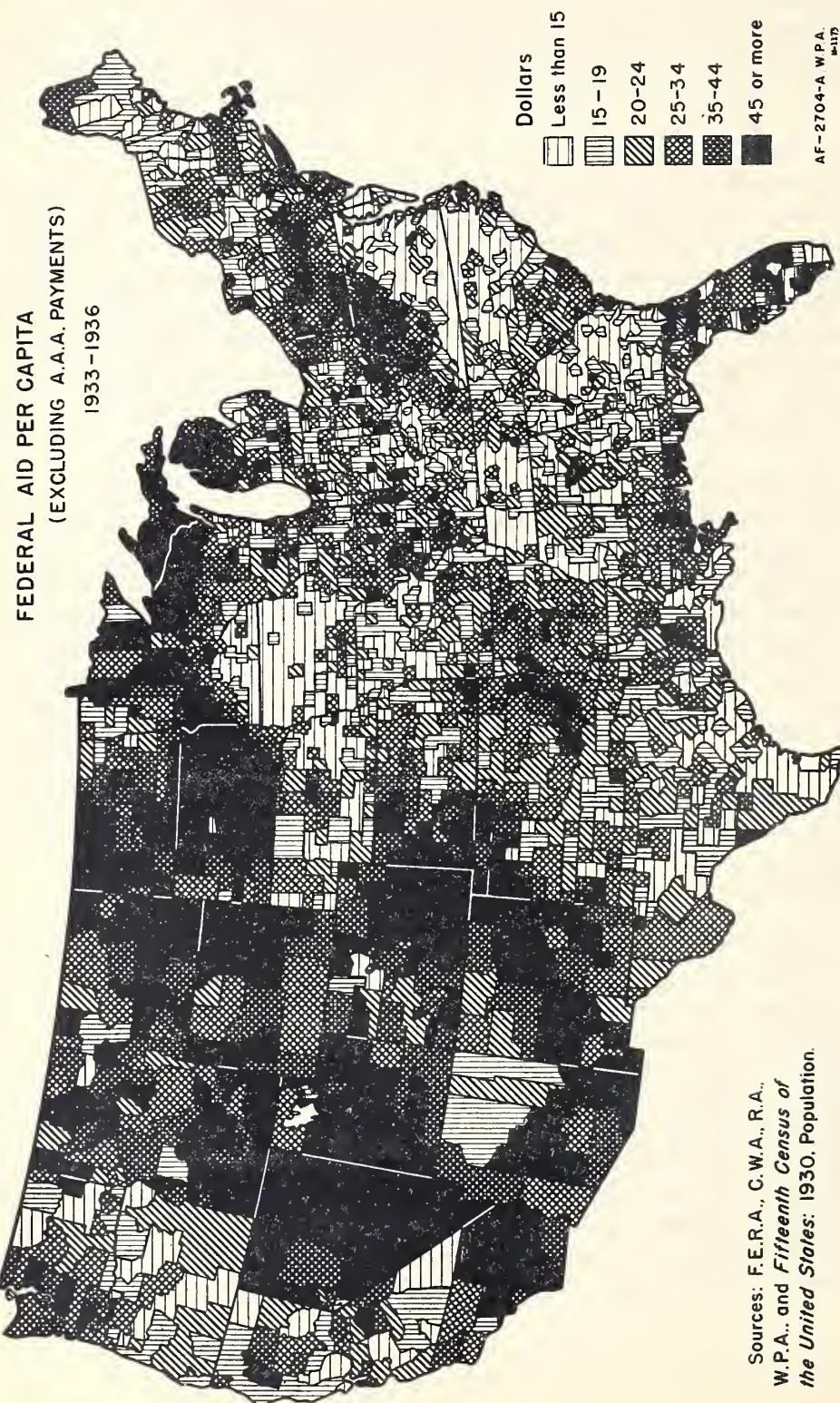
program was initiated. If the total period, July 1, 1935 to June 30, 1937 is included, emergency grants have been necessary in all sections of the Nation, but have been required to a much greater extent in some than in other areas (Figure 29). The most pronounced need has been in drought areas, the Dakotas (especially South Dakota), having been the most severely stricken area. But the reader should note that the Appalachian-Ozark Mountain areas are fairly heavily represented in the grant program.

The Farm Security Administration has a third type of client known as an emergency loan case. These are heads of farm families for whom farm operating loans were approved, but who for one reason or another have not been accepted as standard loan cases. In a great many instances, they have not been accepted as standard cases simply because the rehabilitation supervisors have not found it possible to help these clients work out standard farm-and-home plans. In every instance, they are considered to be suitable for loans, or at least not eligible for grants. These cases do not appear in either Figure 28 or Figure 29.

In attempting to present the total farm-relief problem in terms of available statistics, the reader should look first at Figure 26 in which it is apparent that the areas in greatest distress in June 1935 (those appearing in solid black) were to be found in North and South Dakota, Oklahoma, and New Mexico. In these States, from 27 to 36 percent of all farm families were receiving either relief grants or rehabilitation loans. In only slightly less distress were the States of Idaho, Colorado, Kentucky, and Florida. In these States, from 17 to 22 percent of all farm families were receiving assistance. When all States are included in which 10 percent or more of all farm families were receiving assistance, they will be seen to be those already listed - North and South Dakota, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Idaho, Colorado, Kentucky, and Florida - and, in addition, Montana, Wyoming, Minnesota, Arkansas, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina. 140/

If the picture presented here, and the one presented in Figure 26 are kept in mind, we can now look at Figure 28 and see in which of these distressed areas the rehabilitation program by 1937 had found it most feasible to grant standard loans, upon the assumption that a large number of farmers with supervised credit would be able to dig out of the depression, so to speak. It should be kept in mind, of course, that the number of loans made was based somewhat upon the capacity of the rehabilitation supervisors to complete and submit farm-and-home plans. The areas in which the highest percentage of farmers were granted such loans were in eastern Oregon, Idaho, Utah, New Mexico, Florida, and northern Maine. (These are areas that are most predominantly in solid black or in the next gradation in Figure 28). If all areas are included, in which as many

140/ Asch and Mangus, op. cit., p. 5. (Table 2).



as 50 loans per 1,000 farms were made, it will then be seen that the Great Plains States and the cotton States predominated.

Three questions arise: (1) In what area was rural distress most marked, measured in terms of numbers of farmers on relief? (2) In which of these areas has the greatest number of those in distress been adjudged capable of recovering by use of rehabilitation loans? (3) In which areas has there been the least prospect of immediate recovery as represented by emergency grants? If an attempt is made to utilize available data in answering these questions, it will be seen that the following conclusions probably apply.

The areas of greatest distress have been: (1) the Appalachian-Ozark region, (2) the Lake States Cut-Over region, (3) the Northern Great Plains region, (4) the Southern Great Plains region, and (5) the Utah-southern Idaho drought area.

The areas in which least recovery has been possible, that is, the areas in which grants have had to be continued are primarily in the Northern Great Plains, especially North Dakota and eastern South Dakota; in the Southern Great Plains, and because of drought including a large section of Missouri, northwestern Arkansas and Oklahoma; in the Appalachian-Ozark Mountain regions; and, in addition, central Wisconsin, central Minnesota, and eastern Nebraska.

The areas in which standard rehabilitation loans, plus emergency rehabilitation loans, have been found most feasible are in northern Minnesota, throughout the Cotton Belt, and the eastern section of the Great Plains.

The areas in which considerable distress remains are those in which grants are still found necessary and those in which there are large numbers of farmers who are not yet on standard rehabilitation loans. These are chiefly drought areas, found especially in North and South Dakota, large sections of Kansas and Nebraska, and eastern Montana, and in the Cotton States where there are still thousands of sharecroppers and wage hands who have not been brought into the rehabilitation loan program.

In terms of dollars per capita of the farm population Figure 30 presents a composite picture of the extent of relief over the 4-year period, 1933-1936 inclusive, and shows that the successive droughts contributed more than any other apparent cause to the distress among farm people. But the reader should again note that the so-called bad-land areas of the Nation appear as dark spots in Figure 30 - the Appalachian Mountain section, the Ozark Mountain section, the Lake States Cut-Over, and the so-called Dust Bowl.

Conclusions

As has already been noted at a number of points, relief has been given chiefly as a result of needs that arose out of the depression and drought and not as a result of the steady, long-time influence of most of the major disadvantaging conditions discussed in this report. Relief has therefore been most prevalent and given in greatest quantities in the drought areas. Drought areas, however, are not marked by any other long-time factor of disadvantage unless it be relatively poor lands. Practically all of the poor-land areas of the Nation have been represented by high relief rates, because the ratio of population to natural resources had already placed the areas under strain and the depression served to push large segments of the population in these areas below the poverty line. The same thing was true for practically all over-populated farming areas. But in cases where heavy population does not reside on poor lands a program of rehabilitation has been possible, in which standard loans could be made to temporarily disadvantaged farmers with a high expectation that they could recover a normal economic status.

Using either Figure 26 or Figure 28 it will be seen that with the exception of the Appalachian-Ozark Mountain sections, the intensity of relief does not correlate highly with the outstanding areas of low farm income. (See Fig. 4, p. 11). Neither relief, rehabilitation, nor grants were highest in the farm tenant belts, except where tenancy was combined with drought as in South Dakota. But in number of farm families receiving rehabilitation loans, the cotton tenant belt was heavily represented. (See Fig. 14, p. 50). Practically every area of concentration of farm laborers appears as an area of heavy relief. (See Fig. 10, p. 33.) There was no high correlation between the areas of excessive outward migration and intensity of relief except in the so-called bad-land areas. (See Fig. 21, p. 77, and Fig. 17, p. 63.) This was probably due partly to the fact that the giving of relief tended to stabilize the population within the areas, but was undoubtedly also partly due to the fact that alternative opportunities outside of the areas were very sharply restricted during the depression.

About all that can be said concerning the relationship of relief areas to areas with different levels of living is that in practically no cases has any large amount of relief been necessary in the highest standard-of-living areas and that it has been necessary to a considerably greater extent in the lowest standard-of-living areas than elsewhere, mainly in the poor-land areas. (See Fig. 32, p. 114.) Relief, in broad terms therefore, can be said to be primarily a correlative of poor lands and drought conditions.

It is true that relief was established and has been administered to meet an emergency, but it is also true that emergencies developed chiefly at those spots in agriculture that were and are chronically weak. This is seen to be true whether measured by differences between regions or measured by differences in economic and social status and methods of

farming of types of operators within regions. The largest percentage of farm families has been brought to relief status in those areas where chronic maladjustments have existed - the Lake States Cut-Over Region, the Northern Great Plains, and the Appalachian-Ozark Mountain Region. The classes of families on relief in all areas were those who were operating and living precariously before the depression came, namely those who were farm laborers or croppers, those with large families, and those attempting to make a living on too small acreages or on poor land.

The farm-relief families have not for the most part been newcomers to relief areas. They have been people who were living and working under chronic and basic disadvantaging conditions in these areas, before the depression.

At no place in this chapter have the authors assumed that the administration of relief, developed under great pressure and necessarily hurriedly, has been identical in all areas and all localities of the United States. They recognize that differences in local relief administration make absolute comparison of the statistics for local areas somewhat precarious. Neither have they assumed that every farm family in need has been placed on the relief rolls, nor indeed that every farm family on the relief rolls is adequately described or characterized by the distressing pictures painted in this chapter. They have assumed that by studying the available relief data they would be greatly assisted in arriving at knowledge concerning the relatively advantaging and disadvantaging conditions in various sections of rural America.

Chapter VII

FARM FAMILIES ON LOW STANDARDS OF LIVING

General Conditions

Disadvantaged classes in American agriculture have thus far been described in this report from what we might call three different standpoints: causes of their disadvantage - low income and poor lands; concomitants - farm labor and tenancy; and results of their disadvantage - migration and relief. But we are primarily interested in what actually happens to the lives of these farm people - their homes, their happiness, their health - in short, their standard of living. The final measurement, therefore, of the well-being of our farm people is the measurement of what these six factors or conditions mean in the capacity of farm families to live according to accepted standards of decency and well-being.

A standard of living is a level of consumption of goods and services which is measured in two ways: one, by standards of scientific adequacy, and the other by the satisfactions of the people participating in it. The scientific adequacies can be applied to the physical elements in the standard of living, such as food, clothing, shelter, and health, for which there can be prescribed at least minima that are essential to physical well-being. The satisfactions of the people require not only minimum physical adequacies, but the opportunities to strive for higher levels which they know others in their community or in their society have attained. Any attempt to measure the adequacy of a family's standard of living, therefore, requires that cultural or advancement goods and services, as well as physical goods and services be given consideration.

Since many diverse factors enter into the material standard of living of our rural population, the only feasible method of measurement that enables us to make comparisons throughout the country is the use of comparable data, on a Nation-wide basis, on the presence of certain facilities that tend to contribute to the general well-being and happiness of their users. Data, supplied by the 1930 Census, are in terms of the percentage of farm homes having electricity, telephones, radios, automobiles, and water piped to the dwelling. (See Fig. 31.) Such additional elements in the standard of living as housing, food, clothing, health, educational attainments, and opportunities to participate in recreation, religion, and other phases of community life, while difficult to measure, are recognized as far more important than the mere possession of household facilities.

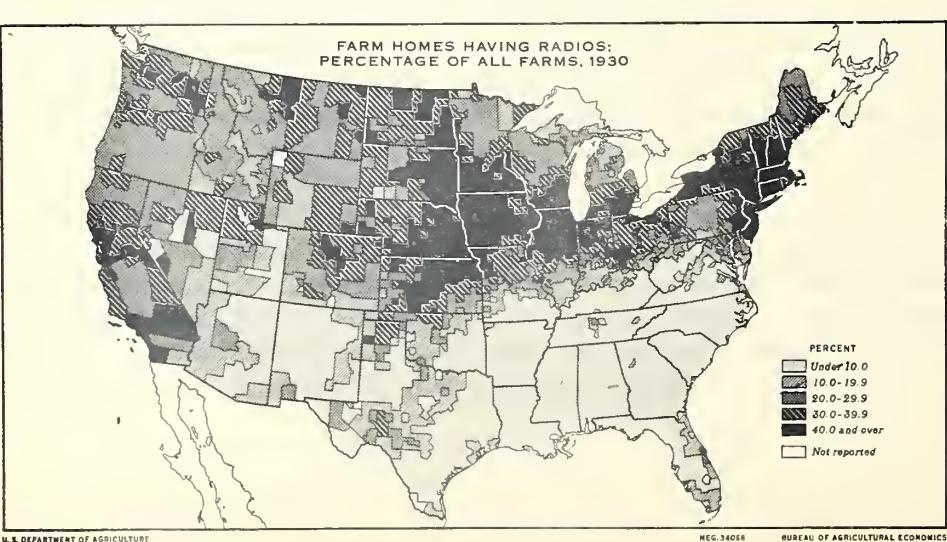
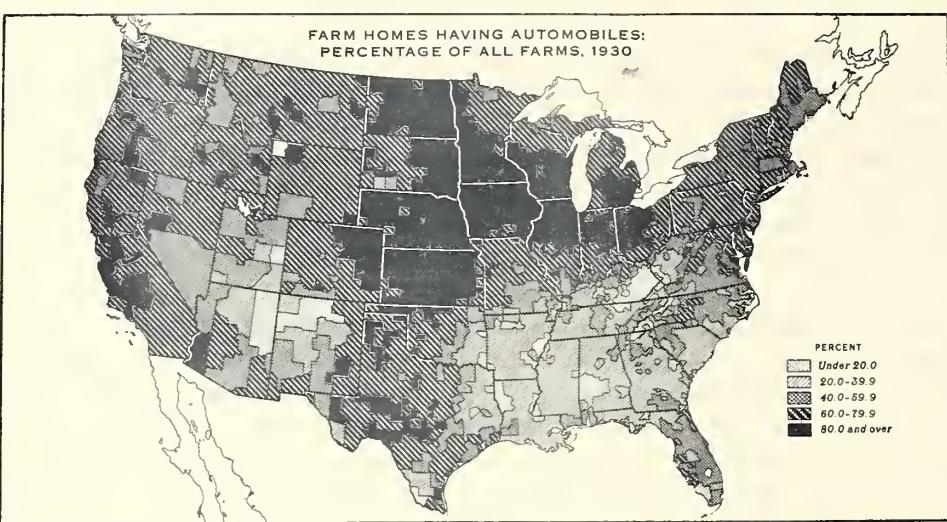
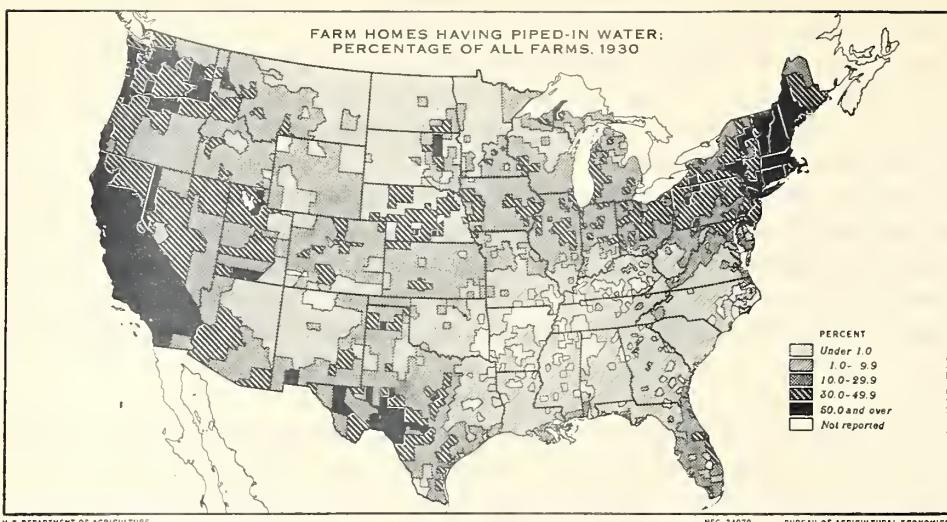
It is impossible to hazard a guess on how many farm families in the United States are living on low standards of living as measured by these more intangible elements. Satisfactory and complete data are not available on a Nation-wide basis. Numerous studies have been made

in an effort to determine what the standard of living of our farm population actually is, but they are scattered and not subject to complete comparison one with the other. In addition, the total number of families on low standards of living cannot be ascertained by any summary of the numbers involved in the six disadvantaging conditions or factors previously discussed, because it is impossible to ascertain which factors or combination of factors involve the same families. Therefore, we can only attempt to measure the standard of living by arbitrarily using the five above-named household facilities as indices, and describe the areas in which the standard of living is low according to this index, together with the areas in which any or all of the six disadvantaging conditions also prevail.

It is almost trite to say that farm families living on low standards are not living according to what we like to think of as our traditional American level of decency and well-being. We are growing accustomed to the belief that something should be done to eradicate urban slum conditions, but relatively few people are aware of the fact that we have rural slum conditions as well. Farm houses in many parts of the country would have been condemned for occupancy long ago had they been in urban areas and open to the scrutiny of public officials and welfare workers. They are old, dangerous as fire hazards, devoid of household facilities, badly in need of repair, and in many cases not even adequate as shelter. Certainly they do not inspire any pride of ownership or joy of occupancy. They are isolated, run-down, and unfit to house human beings.

One of the most fundamental and important elements in the standard of living is food. In all farm areas, a part of the food supply must be bought. The proportion bought and the proportion home-produced vary from State to State, depending upon value of land for commercial crops and other factors. Adequate diets are more likely to be found where the farm family produces its own protective foods than where the food supply is largely purchased, except in very high income areas. Often the meagerness of the money and the meagerness of the land allotted to food production results in insufficient or unbalanced diets, or both. Sustenance becomes just a matter of keeping alive, and malnutrition and under-nourishment cause serious diseases and real suffering. The ultimate social and economic costs of such conditions are obvious and well-known.

After the costs of shelter and food have been taken out of a small income, provision must also be made to clothe the members of the family. It is well known that even in the Cotton Belt many farmers' wives do not have enough cash income to buy cotton dresses to clothe themselves adequately. It is also well known that hundreds of children every year are forced to stay out of school because they do not have the minimum essentials of clothing.



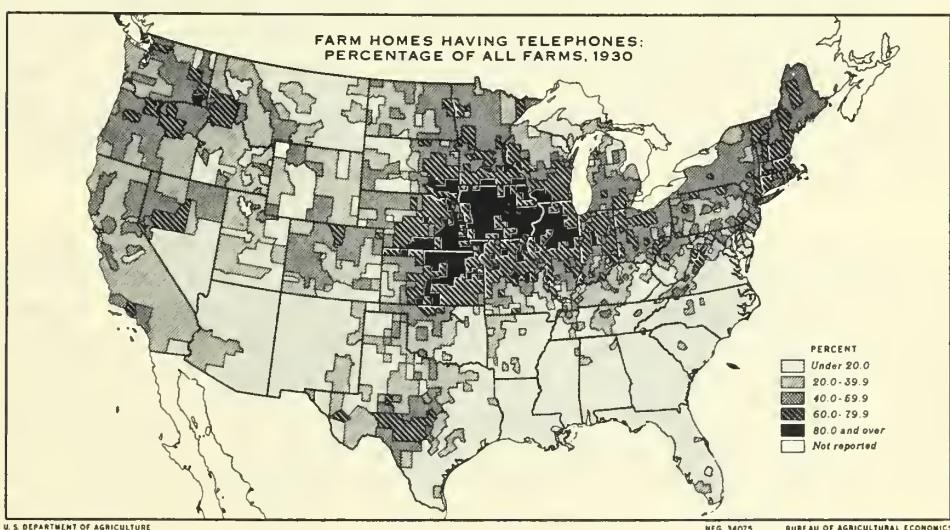
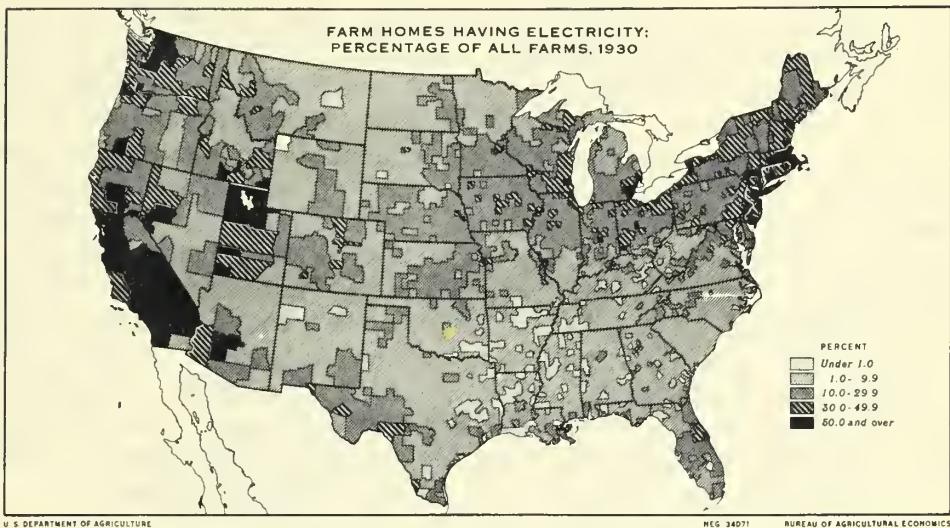


FIG. 31. In these five maps is shown the prevalence of the conveniences which go to make up the standard of living index used in this chapter. The reader will note that in each map the highest rather than the lowest ranking counties are in solid black. When, therefore, he studies these in comparison with Figure 32, he will need to keep in mind that here it is the combination of the lightly hatched sections which constitutes the black spots in Figure 32.

It goes without saying that families who cannot afford the bare necessities of clothing certainly do not enjoy any aesthetic satisfaction which is derived from wearing clothes they like, and it is probable that the failure to have good clothes, in the sense of being well-dressed, creates as great a dissatisfaction, especially among young people on the farm, as any other one thing.

In addition to the absolute necessities of shelter, food, and clothing, there are the intangible elements in the standard of living which contribute to the happiness and well-being of the people. Some of these intangibles attach themselves to food, shelter, and especially to clothing, but for the most part include education, recreation, medical care, insurance, church membership, and charity, and are commonly known as "advancement items." Among low-income farm families, especially where social facilities are limited and inadequate, very little money is left for "advancement." Cash income to provide for school books, reading material like newspapers, magazines, and books, contributions to church, costs of medical and insurance protection, plainly is not adequate. Among thousands of farm families it is totally lacking. Frequently neither time nor money is available for much-needed recreation. Without any of these components of happiness and well-being, the lives of disadvantaged farm families are barren and full of discouragement.

The elements in the standard of living that are sacrificed most universally when families are compelled to live on a low level are these cultural goods and services, for the families are compelled to limit their expenditures chiefly to the physical necessities. This means a poverty of the worst kind and consists of a lack in these people's lives for which there is no compensation.

Detailed standard of living studies from the day of Ernst Engel down to the present show that the percentage of total expenditures that must go for food increases steadily as the total amount of expenditures is diminished and the standard of living is lowered. Gee and Stauffer, in a study of rural and urban living standards in Virginia show that the most "prosperous" families studied spent only 24.3 percent for food, whereas the "intermediate" families spent 39.3 percent, and the "poor" 48.8 percent for this one physical necessity. Contrasted with this, the "prosperous" families spent 7.3 percent, the "intermediate" families, 4.7 percent, and the "poor" families only 2.3 percent for advancement and recreation goods and services. In terms of dollars and cents, this meant that the "prosperous" families were spending \$298, the "intermediate" families \$81, and the "poor" families only \$20 for advancement and recreation goods and services. The "poor" families with an average annual income of \$892 spent \$824 for food, clothing, and shelter and had left only \$68 for the purchase of personal, health, recreation, and similar goods and services. 141/

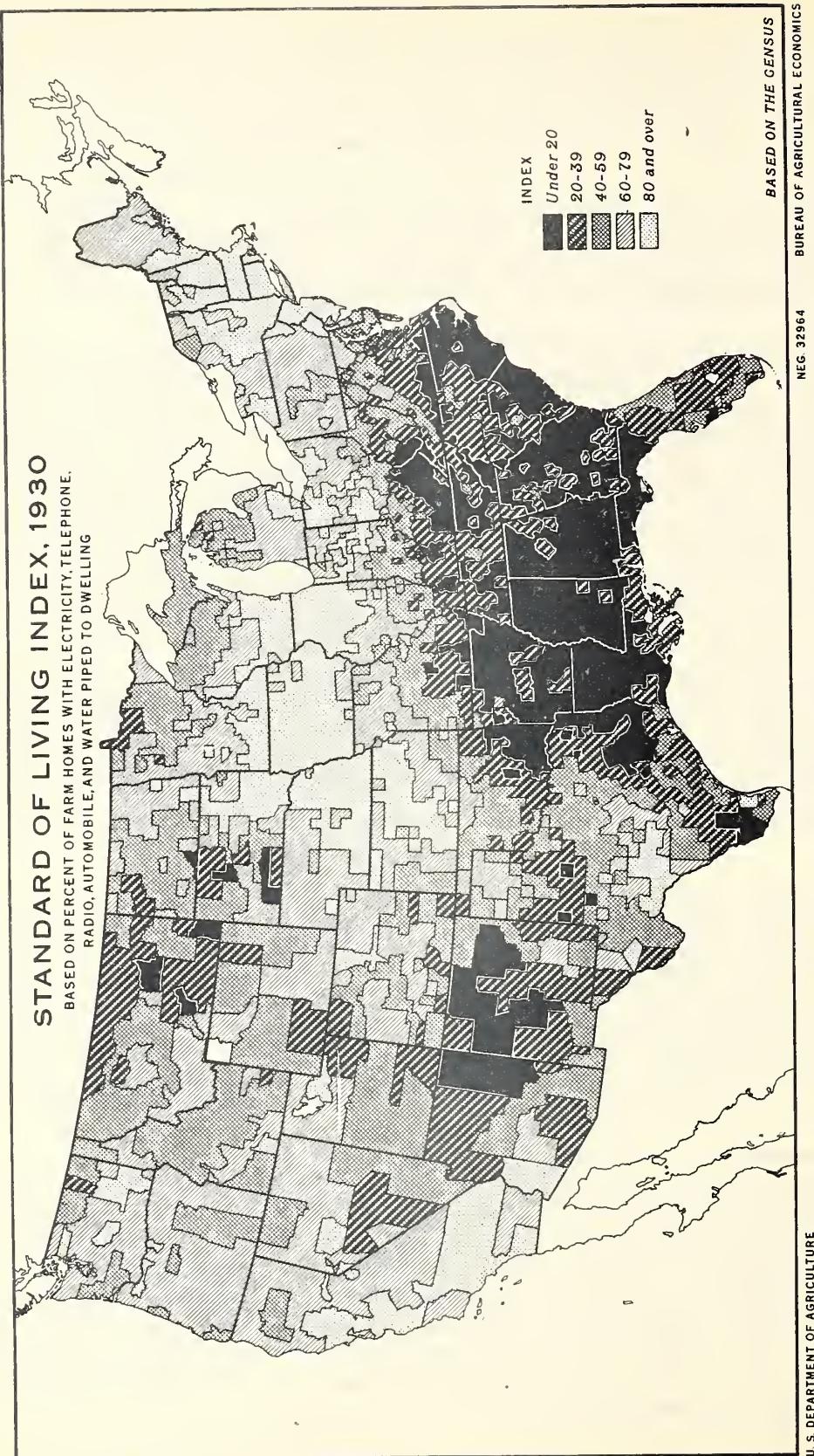
141/ Gee, Wilson, and Stauffer, Wm. H., *Rural and Urban Living Standards in Virginia*, Institute for Research in the Social Sciences, University of Va., Charlottesville, 1929, p. 20.

The farm families under consideration in this treatise in total farm income fall more than \$300 below the "poor" families of the Virginia study, and all evidences point to the fact that advancement or cultural goods and services are almost completely eliminated from their standards of living. Not only are purely cultural goods and services curtailed, but families on such low standards of living are compelled to sacrifice also what normally would be considered necessities. Spending, as they sometimes do, 60 percent of their total annual income for food, they are still compelled to live with inadequate food standards. 142/ Clothing and shelter standards suffer in the same way.

There is little doubt that the low standard-of-living areas described in this chapter constitute the rural slums of the Nation. It is in these areas that hundreds of thousands of people live in one- and two-room shacks, thus badly overcrowded, and under insanitary and unhealthful conditions. Here millions of children are born and grow to adulthood without ever having had the proper kinds or sufficient amounts of food and are inadequately clad. Children are born by the thousands with no attendants but midwives. Diseases resulting from malnutrition are prevalent and illness is often cared for by patent medicine, home remedies, or superstitious practices, or not cared for at all. Although certain public facilities, especially schools, are guaranteed, other cultural advantages are at a minimum. Participation in organized religious life and constructive recreation events, and opportunities for enjoying music, art, or even reading, are not a part of their daily lives. But there are many reasons to believe that once the American people are fully and accurately apprised of the conditions that exist in some of our rural areas, a real attempt will be made to rid the Nation of these sore spots.

Within areas in which a large percentage of farm families have low standards of living, there are other families who live on levels equal to the best in the Nation. In some areas, the difference between income groups is so marked that there is little interchange or social contact between families living in these different strata. Where this is the case, the processes of socialization and cultural development are definitely stultified because of the incapacity of large numbers within the

142/ Loomis, C. P., and Leonard, O. E., Standards of Living in an Indian Village and a Reclamation Village, Farm Security Administration and Bureau of Agricultural Economics, U. S. Dept. of Agr. (Unpublished.) See also preliminary releases of the Consumer Purchases Study of the Bureau of Home Economics, especially the studies of farm families in the following States: California, Colorado, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Mississippi, Montana, New Jersey, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin, 1937.



community to emulate those having higher standards. A community standard of living rests to a considerable extent not only upon institutions and agencies that are publicly supported, but also on the wholehearted participation of the major portion of the citizens in the social and cultural life of the other members of the community. Where there is distinct stratification of economic and social classes and where the lower classes constitute a major percentage of the total population, they tend to drag down the social and cultural life of the whole community.

In periods of depression, the standard of living of practically all of the people in the community is lowered, but generally not lowered equally. Those without cash and credit reserves succumb most quickly and suffer most. In thousands of cases, these people have been forced into relief status and not only become marked in the community by this status, but suffer in their own minds more intensely than is commonly imagined. In other words, the lowering of their spirit or morale, which is the psychological aspect of their standard of living, is even greater than the lowering of their material standard of living.

Areas of Concentration

Measured by the index used here, there is a wide difference between the geographic areas of the Nation in the rural standard of living. There are poor families who live on low standards of living in all sections, but the concentration of these people in great masses is to be found in relatively well-marked areas. These areas in the order of their magnitude, whether measured by geography or by the number of people, are as follows: in what may be called the Old South; in the Highlands of northern Arizona and New Mexico; and in the High Plains of Montana. It is in these areas above all others of the Nation that people in large numbers live under conditions which have just been described.

The Old South

The area designated here as the Old South includes more than is generally thought of as the South. This low standard of living belt can be roughly described as an area bounded on the north by a line that runs from central Virginia and West Virginia westward to central Missouri, skirting the Ozark Mountains on the west and running southward through eastern Texas to the Gulf of Mexico. It includes all of the eastern Cotton Belt and the Appalachian-Ozark Mountain ranges (Figure 32). Certain parts of the area have appeared in solid black in practically all of the base maps that have been used in this report to designate the location of specific, disadvantaging conditions or factors.

The most important single factor operating in the South as a whole to make it the lowest standard of living area in the country is low

income. In the Cotton Belt, where the sharecropper type of tenancy prevails, farm families are not able to obtain household facilities because their only asset, which is credit, is quickly consumed to provide for food, clothing, and shelter. The prevailing system of tenancy also tends to make this a highly migrative area, chiefly because many tenants move to new locations at the expiration of each year's lease. This practice is not conducive to raising the standard of living, for individual and community facilities cannot thrive among transient, ever-moving farm families.

Poor land is a primary disadvantaging factor in the Appalachian-Ozark area, but it is not so in large sections of the Cotton Belt. For example, the Mississippi Delta, some of the richest land in the Nation, appears in solid black in Figure 32. In the Cotton Belt, it is rather that the corollaries of a cash crop system, either cotton or tobacco, and the accompanying system of tenancy, together with the presence of a large Negro population, tend to lower the standard of living. In the mountain areas, it is poor land, the depletion of supplementary natural resources, and high birth rates, together with a high degree of isolation, that tend to pull down the level of living.

The entire South, as a result of these factors that contribute to a low standard of living, is characterized by inadequate housing, limited household equipment and family living facilities, inadequate diet, lack of medical care, insufficient funds for clothing, and poor educational and recreational facilities. Throughout 7 States of the Southern Cotton Belt, 143/ the average value of farm dwellings in 1930 was only \$467, ranging from \$194 for Negro tenants in Alabama to \$1,083 for white owners in South Carolina. In all cases, the average was somewhat higher for whites than for Negroes and higher for owners than for tenants. 144/ The majority of all houses were unpainted frame structures, poorly built, crowded, some without ceilings and many without screens, most of them without any sanitation facilities, and the great majority without such household conveniences as telephones, electricity, and piped-in water. 145/

One writer describes the houses furnished to the tenants and sharecroppers of the South as "among the poorest in the Nation;" he says, "screening is the exception rather than the rule, and the sanitation is

143/ The 7 States referred to are North and South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Arkansas.

144/ Woofter, T. J., Jr., Landlord and Tenant on the Cotton Plantation, Mono. V, Works Progress Administration, Washington, D. C., 1936. p. 94.

145/ Hartman, W. H., and Wooten, H. H., Georgia Land Use Problems, Agr. Exp. Sta. Bull. No. 191, Experiment, Ga., May 1935. McCormick, T. C., Farm Standards of Living in Faulkner County, Arkansas, Agr. Exp. Sta. Bull. No. 279, Fayetteville, Ark., 1932.

primitive." 146/ A Negro home demonstration agent described the interior of colored tenants' homes in the Yazoo Mississippi Delta as follows: "The average home has only the furniture they cannot do without, such as beds, chairs (usually not more than four), possibly a dresser and wash-stand, more often a dresser than a wash-stand. It is a rare case to find books. Few take a monthly paper. Most of the houses are papered with newspapers which are bought by solicit. [sic]. Magazines are used for pictures only. Many of these are pasted on the walls of the homes. The women have learned through club work to make inexpensive rugs from discarded stockings and clothing. Aside from these, there are no rugs. Nine out of every ten have no window shades. All have some kind of curtains." 147/

Where farming is on a cash-crop basis and much of the food must be bought, over half of the available cash income of a family often goes to buy it. This results in an inadequate and ill-balanced diet, consisting chiefly of meat, meal, and molasses. The lack of fruit, milk, and vegetables has serious effects on the health of the people. Hygiene and medical care are practically impossible and victims of ill health are forced to use home and patent remedies. Little of the income can be spent on clothing. "The tenant farmer, often with debts to his landlord absorbing all his cash income, pleads for a little money, at least enough to buy his wife a dress. Each year in the Black Belt thousands of farm mothers chop cotton and pick cotton and then fail to get a new cotton dress at the end of the year. The clothes for the children in many of the families are strikingly inadequate." 148/

The material side of the standard of living is grossly inadequate, but the non-material is even more inadequate. Social participation of all kinds is extremely limited. Educational facilities all over the South are far below the average for the Nation. Taxes for schools in the Southern States take as much per dollar of wealth as in other sections of the country, but the wealth is so limited that the revenue amounts to a very small appropriation per child. Moreover, the large families and the emigration of adults of the productive ages, characteristic of the South, give the rural districts a much larger number of children to educate in relation to the number of productive adults and the value of taxable property than other areas have. The agricultural system of the region, with its encouragement of labor by children during the school term, is a

146/ Woofter, T. J., Jr. op. cit.

147/ Dickins, Dorothy, A Nutrition Investigation of Negro Tenants in the Yazoo Mississippi Delta, Miss. Agr. Exp. Sta. Bull. No. 254, State College, Miss., Aug. 1928. p. 10.

148/ Raper, Arthur F., Preface to Peasantry, Univ. of N. C. Press, Chapel Hill, N. C., 1936. p. 46.

further handicap. As would be expected, the rate of illiteracy is high throughout the South. 149/

In practically all of the counties in the Southern Cotton Belt States in 1929, less than 10 percent of the total had water piped to the dwelling, less than 3 percent had electricity, less than 15 percent had radios, less than 20 percent telephones, and less than 40 percent had automobiles. In the Appalachian-Ozark Highlands, in most of the counties less than 10 percent of the houses had water piped to the dwelling; in practically all of the counties less than 10 percent of the houses had electricity and telephones, less than 15 percent had radios, and in many counties as few as 20 percent of the families had automobiles. While figures like these are not in any sense conclusive, it is reasonable to assume that households that lack these facilities also lack most of the social and cultural advantages that their more fortunate neighbors have.

Throughout the Appalachian-Ozark Highlands, housing is generally poor. 150/ The average value of farm dwellings in 1929 in most of the counties was less than \$1,000; in many counties it was less than \$500, and in several counties, as low as \$300. In three representative counties of the area - Laurel and Knott in Kentucky and Grayson in Virginia - houses were evaluated at an average of \$440, \$340, and \$930 respectively. Typical farm families in these three counties spent an average of \$324 (Laurel, 1927-28), \$450 (Knott, 1929-30), and \$399 (Grayson, 1930-31) for their annual purchases of family living goods and services. Goods furnished by the farm were valued at \$365, \$517, and \$376, consisting mainly of foodstuffs. 151/

The money value of miscellaneous living expenses, including furnishings and equipment, transportation, personal and medical care, recreation, education, and community welfare averaged only \$82, \$115, and \$184 per family in these three counties. "The adequacy of these sums," a student of the region writes, "may be judged by the fact that the amounts recommended for such expenditures in a budget prepared by the Chicago Council of Social Agencies for an economically independent family of five total \$390. The comparison is relevant since the cost of the items included in this group varies much less from city to country than

149/ Woofter, T. J., Jr., op. cit. Taylor, Carl C., and Zimmerman, C. C., Economic and Social Conditions of North Carolina Farmers, North Carolina Dept. of Agr. Tenancy Commission, Raleigh, N. C., 1922.

150/ See Morgan, Mack J., 1935 Families Studied in Kentucky, Resettlement Administration, Arlington, Ky., 1936. (Unpublished Report.)

151/ Williams, Faith M., Variations in Farm Family Living in Economic and Social Problems and Conditions of the Southern Appalachians, Misc. Publ. No. 205, U. S. Dept. of Agr., Washington, D. C., 1935. pp. 137-153.

the cost of food and of housing." 152/

Northern New Mexico and Arizona

The reader will note, by comparing Figure 4 and Figure 32, that there is a striking correlation between the localities of low standard of living in northern New Mexico and Arizona and the localities of low income. This particular area, which is largely desert and mountainous country, has never been a prosperous agricultural area. With the exception of the small irrigated valleys, the land is adapted primarily to grazing. The sale of livestock brings most of the cash income, and with the advent of the drought and depression this was greatly curtailed. 153/ The market for out-of-State seasonal labor has been almost completely cut off and as a result of these combined factors, great numbers of the farmers were forced onto relief rolls. The emergency aspect of the situation in these two States has been accentuated by the long-time handicap of too heavy population and too much livestock for the available natural resources.

A cultural factor enters into the standard of living which makes its level difficult to measure, especially on a comparative basis with the rest of the country. The large proportion of Indian and Spanish-American population has a criterion of well-being that is vastly different from that of native-whites. Adobe houses are considered adequate whereas they would not be acceptable in other sections. In general, however, housing is inadequate, for the average value of farm dwellings in 1930 was less than \$300 in many of the counties.

Household facilities are meager. In 1930, very few of the families had piped-in water or electricity in their houses, less than 15 percent had radios, less than 20 percent had telephones, and less than 40 percent had automobiles. Were it not for the great distances between farmsteads, the percentage of automobiles would probably be considerably lower. Population is so scattered that to develop and maintain social institutions and facilities is extremely difficult. Parts of this area have a high percentage of hired farm laborers, whose instability adds to the difficulty of having successful social institutions.

Adequate information on living expenses is not available, but an unpublished report of a study of a small group of open-country farmers

152/ Ibid., p. 149; also Garnett, Wm. E., Social Conditions and Social Organizations, and Gaumnitz, W. H., and Alderman, L. R., Schools and Education, in same publication.

153/ Survey of Union County, New Mexico, and Roosevelt County, N. M., Unpublished Reports, Division of Social Research, Works Progress Administration, Washington, D. C., 1934.

in Dona Ana County, New Mexico, primarily farm laborers in the irrigated valleys, reveals that living expenditures for 1935 were approximately \$350. Over half of the total, or \$193, was spent for food, practically all of which had to be bought, since there were almost no gardens. Only about \$50 was available to clothe families that averaged 5 persons each. After \$20 had been allocated to health maintenance, \$10 to automobile expenses, \$20 to fuel, and \$9 to household items, very little remained for emergencies or incidentals. 154/

Northern High Plains

The Northern High Plains area does not appear as one of the low income areas of the Nation, but the highly mechanized agricultural enterprise in this region must carry heavy operating costs and must be prepared to gamble with the hazards of bad weather which often result in several successive years of crop failure. 155/ When a large part of available income must be invested in the business of farming itself, the amount remaining for family living is automatically reduced. In this High Plains region, the reduction has gone so far that the standard of living has fallen to a low level.

This region which includes most of northern and western Montana, parts of Wyoming, and North and South Dakota, is semi-arid, with a sparse population. Here again, the relative isolation of the population hinders maintenance of social institutions. Great distances between the large farms mean high road costs, heavy expenses for schools and churches, and for obtaining electricity and water facilities.

In practically all of this region less than 10 percent of the farms in 1930 had piped-in water and electricity; in Montana and part of Wyoming, less than 20 percent reported telephones and many counties in the Dakotas had less than 40 percent.

Scattered Areas

Figure 32 shows that there are a few scattered areas of low standard of living which have not thus far been included in the discussion. The southernmost tip of Texas, Florida, and the Lakes States Cut-Over country appear also as black spots on the map. While Florida appears chiefly in the second gradation and the Cut-Over country almost entirely in the third, the standard of living in these areas is low.

In Texas, the level of living is probably considerably lowered by the presence of a large Mexican population and in both Texas and

154/ Loomis, C. P., and Leonard, O. E., op. cit.

155/ Maladjustments in Land Use in the United States, National Resources Board Supplementary Report, Part VI, 1935, p. 36.

Florida by the continual migration of seasonal workers in agriculture. The transient character of the lives of these people is a severe handicap to community stability and effective social institutions.

In the Lake States Cut-Over country, the primary cause of the low living standard is incorrect use of the land resources. Throughout this area, which should have been largely restricted to lumbering and mining, farming has been introduced and has usually been highly unsuccessful. As a natural result, the Cut-Over is an area of relatively low income.156/ Farmers, even on a part-time or subsistence basis, have not been able to make a satisfactory living from the land even during relatively prosperous years. Therefore, the depression forced large numbers onto relief rolls. 157/

The Cut-Over country for almost four decades has been a fairly heavy migrative area. The prospect of cheap land has drawn many settlers from such large cities as Duluth, Chicago, Milwaukee, and Detroit. When the lumbering and mining industries were prosperous, the migration was chiefly into the area, but since their decline, and especially during periods of depression, there has been a rather constant flow of population in and out. Needless to say, the support of schools and churches is a strain on local resources. Were it not for the recreational advantages of the area and the prosperous resort business there, such facilities as electricity, water power, and good roads would probably not have been provided.

A few other secondary areas are large enough to require consideration. The northeast corner of Utah, the northwest corner of Colorado, and the southwest corner of Wyoming include a number of counties with low standards of living as measured by this index. This rather mountainous area, although penetrated by streams, is too rough for successful farming and too isolated to get the facilities which compose this index. The part in south central Nevada is semi-desert, and the population is exceedingly sparse. The areas of western and southwestern Texas, eastern and central New Mexico are to be explained by a combination of factors - large holdings and isolated farmsteads in west Texas and eastern New Mexico, mountains and poor lands in southwest Texas, and the presence of Spanish-American and Indian population in central New Mexico.

156/ See Kirkpatrick, E.L., Needed Standards of Living for Rural Resettlement, Wis. Rural Rehabilitation Div., Resettlement Administration, Madison, Wis., May 1936 (Mimeographed.)

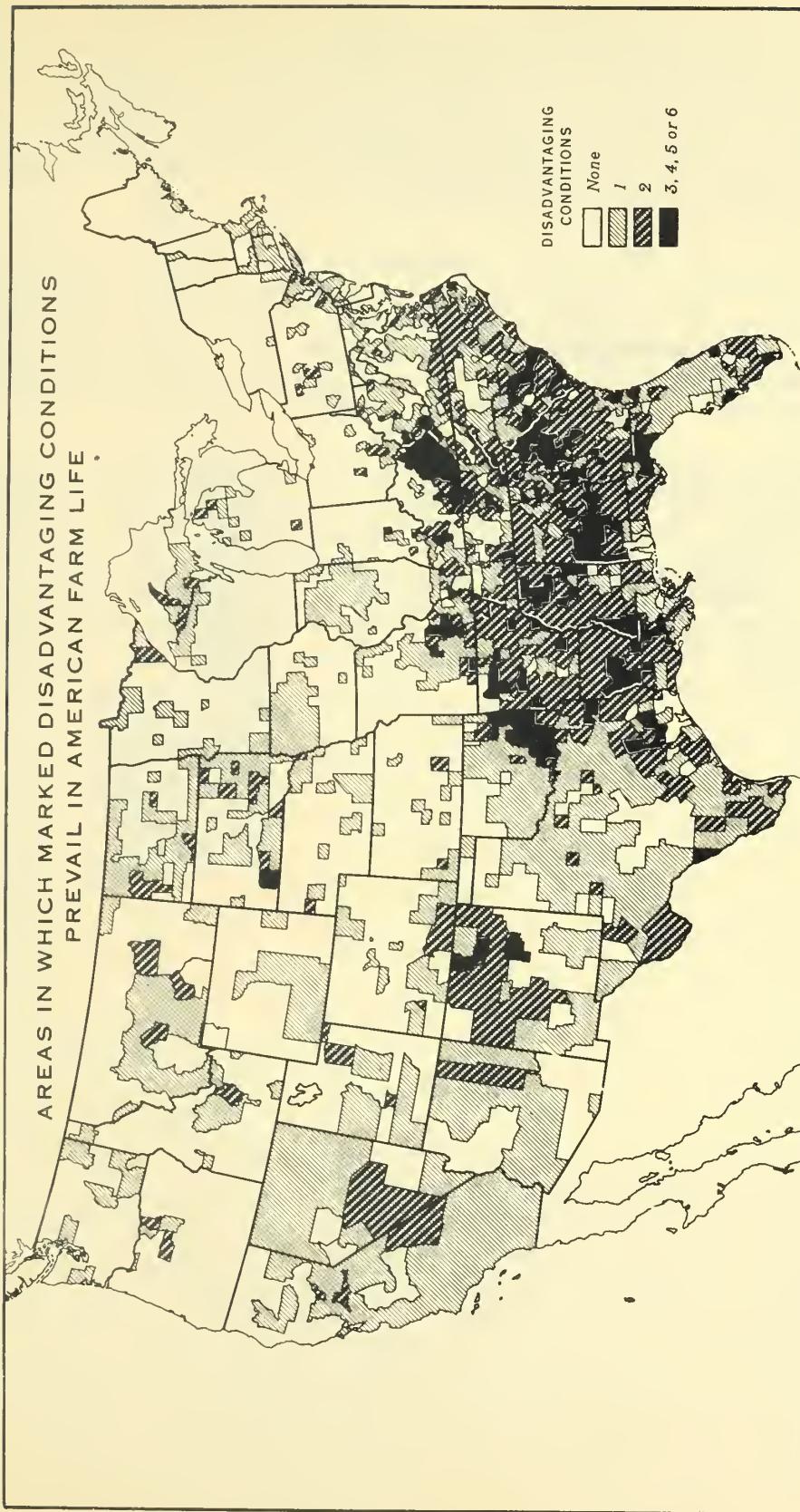
157/ Kirkpatrick, E.L., and Thomas, Ruth M., Resettlement and Rehabilitation in the Crandon Land Purchase Area, (Prelim. Report) Wis. Emergency Relief Administration, Madison, Wis., Aug. 1933; Kirkpatrick, E.L., et al, How Farm Families Meet the Emergency, Res. Bull. 126, Agr. Exp. Sta., Univ. of Wis., Madison, Wis., 1935.

Conclusions

Any fundamentally disadvantaging factor that operates consistently in agriculture is sure, in due time, to reflect itself in the standard of living of the people who farm. This is true whether the factor is physical, such as poor or eroding soils or recurrent droughts, whether it is financial, such as low income or bad economic arrangements in relation to tenants and laborers, or whether it is social and cultural, represented by ineffective and inefficient social institutions and organizations. When two or more disadvantaging factors are operating or conditions are prevailing over a wide geographic area, the standard of living of large segments of the population within the area is almost certain to fall to a very low level. If, therefore, there were available sufficient data on a Nation-wide basis, out of which to construct an adequate index to the rural standard of living, this index would more truly than any other reflect the conditions that this report has been attempting to describe and analyze.

It is recognized by the authors that the index of the standard of living used here is not adequate. It does not contain any measure of the consumption levels of three great physical necessities - food, clothing, and shelter. Neither does it include any adequate measure of the non-material elements in the standard of living. Rather it is constructed out of factors or elements that run midway between physical necessities and purely cultural goods and services. Telephones, radios, electric lights, running water, and automobiles are all purchased goods and services which rank below food, clothing, and shelter in physical necessities, and in the culture of our time and society are generally ranked above purely cultural goods, services, and activities. Knowing that economically and socially disadvantaged groups sacrifice the purely cultural elements in their standard of living before they sacrifice physical necessities, conveniences, or comforts, it may be taken for granted that where the standard of living falls very low in terms of the index used here, the more subtle elements have been sacrificed to even a greater extent. In areas in which a large percentage of the farm population cannot afford and does not have any of these modern conveniences, it is well known from specific studies, many of which have been cited here, that even the physical necessities have been sacrificed to a considerable extent. It is believed, therefore, that the index to the standard of living which has been used by necessity serves fairly well to reflect the actual differences in the levels of living of the different geographic areas. If this be true, then the black spots in Figure 32 show where the sore spots in American agriculture are, as measured by the lives of the farm people.

To test the validity of this conclusion, the reader should study Figures 32 and 33 in comparison. It will be seen that there is a close



BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS

NEG. 34100

FIG. 33. In this map are combined the areas in which 50 percent or more of the farms yielded less than \$600 farm income in 1929; areas in which 50 percent or more of all gainfully employed in agriculture were hired laborers in 1930; areas in which 50 percent or more of all farms were tenant or cropper farms in 1930; areas in which 20 percent or more of the farms should be replaced because of maladjustment in land uses; areas which had lost all their natural increase in population between 1920 and 1930 and in addition had lost 20 percent of their 1920 population; areas in which 30 percent or more of the total population was on relief in June 1935; and areas in which 20 percent or less had standard of living facilities as measured by an index combining electricity, telephones, radios, automobiles, and water piped to the dwelling.

relationship between farm areas with the lowest standard of living and those areas in which two or more disadvantaging conditions are operating. Practically the whole South, including the Appalachian-Ozark mountains, has in nearly every county two or more of the factors discussed in this report. The only exceptions are central and west Texas, Oklahoma, Florida, and certain of the more prosperous agricultural areas in Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Louisiana.

It will be seen that those counties in which three or more disadvantaging factors are operating almost universally fall within the blackest areas on the standard of living map. Even small areas that have three or more disadvantaging factors, such as a few spots in New Mexico and a small spot in South Dakota, coincide with areas in which the farm-family standard of living is as low as any in the Nation.

The rural slums of the Nation exist in the geographic areas of the Nation represented by the black spots of these two maps. In these areas approximately one-third of our farm people live. These areas were not reduced to poverty solely by the recent depression, although, it was here that the greatest percentage of the people succumbed to the conditions of the depression and felt the impact of these conditions first and most severely. They have been and still are the chronic weak spots in American rural life.